This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

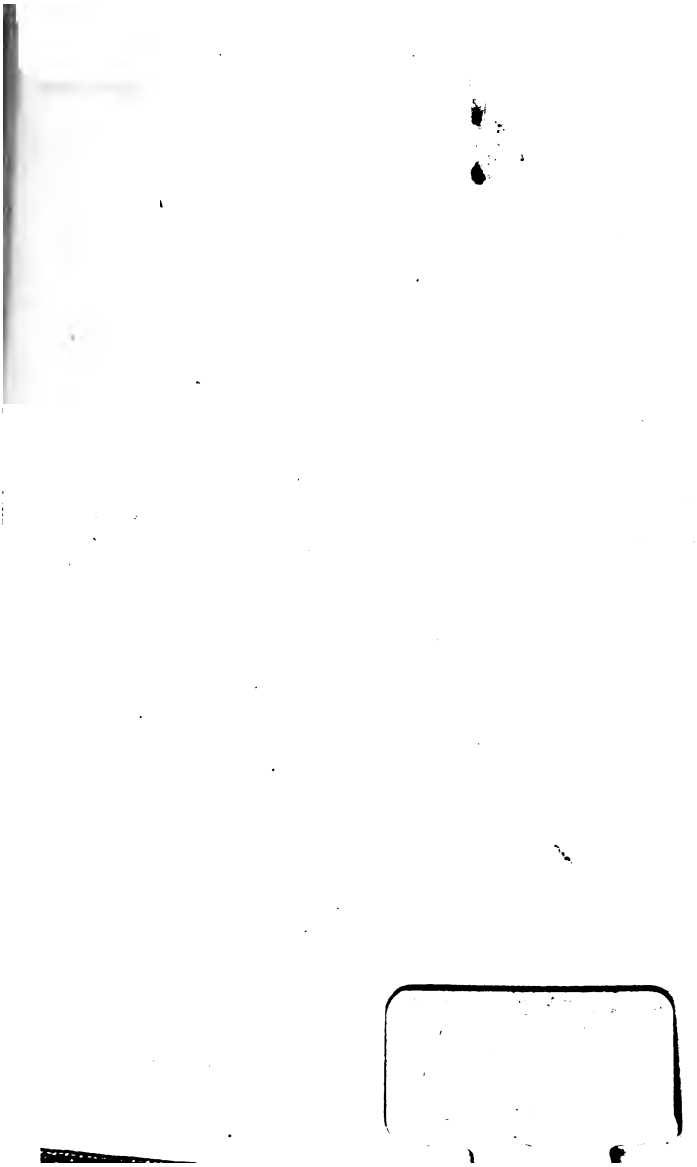
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

A Stumbler in Wide Shoes

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07489561 0



NC
Mare

150.

50..00

F

THE PROTEAN SERIES.

16*mo*, *Cloth*, $1.00 *per volume.*

IN THE VALLEY OF TOPHET.

By H. W. NEVINSON, author of "Slum Stories of London."

Powerful connected stories of English mining regions.

"Written by the author of the unique and remarkable 'Slum Stories of London.' The pathos is exquisite. The humor is delicate and striking. It is in every respect a marvelously good collection of gems in fiction."—*The Buffalo Commercial.*

"Has the faculty of touching the heart-strings."—*The Denver Times.*

WISDOM'S FOLLY.

A Study in Feminine Development. By A. V. DUTTON.

THE WAY THEY LOVED AT GRIMPAT.

Village Idylls. By E. RENTOUL ESLER.

A volume of love stories of peculiar charm.

Mr. S. R. Crockett says: "A book this to read and reread; to lay aside for six months in a drawer, and then, upon rediscovery, to welcome with joy, and sit down to read all over again."

THE QUICKSANDS OF PACTOLUS.

A Novel. By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

Life in California, illustrating the peculiar effects of the rapid accumulation of wealth in that society.

THE TOUCH OF SORROW.

A story of life in the English upper classes, by one who evidently lives it. A moral conveyed, but not obtruded.

A STUMBLER IN WIDE SHOES.

A story of temptation and self-sacrifice. The scenes are laid in Holland and England. The hero is an artist.

IN PREPARATION:

A DIPLOMAT IN LONDON.

Letters and Notes, 1871–1877. Translated from the French of M. Charles Gavard.

Interesting both for its light on the diplomacy of the Commune, and for exceptionally graphic and familiar glimpses of life among the English aristocracy.

HENRY HOLT & CO., NEW YORK.

Protean Series—No. 6

A STUMBLER IN WIDE SHOES

by

E. S. March.

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1896

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
116350B
1942

COPYRIGHT, 1896,
BY
HENRY HOLT & CO.

THE MERSHON COMPANY PRESS,
RAHWAY, N. J.

A STUMBLER IN WIDE SHOES.

CHAPTER I.

AMSTERDAM on a sunny spring evening!

It was like a time of truce in a siege. The beleaguering waters of the northern sea had ceased to push their battering-rams against the ramparts of the resisting town, and her watchful defenders could breathe freely, knowing that the war was over for another year, that the time was coming when their stanch ally, the sun, would raise the siege for them, and when, in the contest between man and nature, man would triumph once more.

But a truce is not peace, nor is absence of attack victory, and Amsterdam keeps all her sentinels at their posts.

The Venice of the North does not float gondolas on her canals, and trust the placid waters which glide in her streets, but guards against their treachery with sluice-gate and dyke—names for shield and buckler in her war with the sea.

The very sky lacked the calm of southern climes. The sun was sinking behind the houses, and little scarlet clouds drifted lightly across a space which gained grandeur by its height above the low horizon, and which had not altogether lost a weird and wintry

grayness. Faint scarlet reflections drifted less lightly across the wide waters of the Amstel, hidden here and there by the black bulk of a barge, or broken by the ripples from some small craft that crossed them, as earthly reflections of things heavenly are somewhat apt to be hidden and broken. There was a brown swirl in shadowed corners, a smell of cordage, and fishery, and peaty smoke, a gusty coldness in the rising wind, a clatter and movement of many feet on rough stones, all the stir and struggle of a northern people beating its way to such end as it may be seeking, instead of the rest and languor of a southern land, where one has but to wait for the good that nature is sure to send.

But even in Amsterdam summer comes at last, and just now it seemed so near that some adventurous housewives had consigned their stoves to the mighty grasp of the house-crane, to be slowly raised to their garret store-room, there to wait until autumn and ague called them down again.

These same cranes flung grotesque shadows on roofs and gables, and the trees by the water threw long black bars of shade on the roadways, while the level rays from the sunset lighted up the bricks in the pavement until they glowed like rude mosaic.

To a stranger it might seem like a city on the stage. A stranger, too, were he so disposed, might find amusement in watching the stream of passers-by, and noting how unphlegmatic the phlegmatic Dutchman can occasionally be. National temperaments have become proverbial, but, alas for the fallibility of human aphorisms, there is no rule without exceptions. Look at that rubicund Frenchman, that obese Yankee,

that fair-haired Spaniard, that lank and lantern-jawed Englishman, and pause before you tie a whole nation down to its general characteristic !

Even now, following with the crowd, was a man at whose nationality it would be hard to guess from his outward demeanor. Striding westward, with the sunlight on his face, and his hair, worn rather long, lifted by the breeze, came Rupert van Hals, a Dutchman born. He walked quickly, but not with the steady gait of the men who met and passed him. First one thing and then another attracted him ; he stopped to greet a friend, turned aside to look at a quaint carving or a rare engraving in the little dingy shop-windows, which rather concealed than displayed their treasures, and more than once went halfway down a street, only to come back again.

Suddenly his eye, quick to seize any impression of beauty, was drawn to the figure of a woman who walked behind him, and he waited to let her pass. She was a foreigner, probably an Englishwoman, he thought, as he watched her from the doorway of a picture-dealer's shop. She wore a dress of soft tender green, with a shade of somberness in it, as all tender things have ; round her shoulders a full white kerchief was crossed and knotted, and her fair hair was covered by a close bonnet. She looked about her with a little quiet wonder, but rather at things than at persons, and, with the blinding light in her eyes, did not see Rupert as she passed. He followed her at once. She hesitated now and then, as if not sure of the way, and when she paused, so did he, though why he followed he could not tell. At last she turned out of a narrow street toward one of the

canals, and before her, gaunt and black against the sky stood a drawbridge with its machinery for lifting. The wind blew chill off the water; a breeze was springing up as the sun sank.

The shadows were fading and merging in one great dimness; the light grew paler and paler; a crowd of market-girls clattered along the stones, elbowing their way homeward, and talking loudly in their rough, hard speech. Once or twice, but for her white kerchief, Van Hals would have lost sight of the woman in whose steps he walked.

The wind blew fresher, and involuntarily people quickened their steps. As the little crowd neared the bridge, the chains shook and rattled, and the Dutch-women, who knew what that meant, hurried on. The bridge was to be raised to let a boat go by, and already a big brown sail, rather below the level of the street, was gliding stealthily nearer and nearer. If they waited, their way to the opposite side of the canal was barred for perhaps ten minutes—boys and men sprang forward; the market-women ran and pushed; Rupert lost sight of the English girl in the crowd. He saw half a dozen boys on the bridge, which rose as their feet touched it, and heard their laugh as they ran down the gradually increasing declivity, and gained the other side. Then he noted the sudden dead stop which indicates that something has happened, and, as he darted forward, gathered broken words which told him, before he saw, that the English girl was in the water.

Hurried forward by the crowd, and not knowing, as they did, the danger, she could not stop herself when she found no bridge at her feet, but fell into the canal.

Van Hals had his coat off in a moment, and jumped after her; fortunately the barge below was coming slowly, and the man on board saw her fall, so that Rupert caught her as she rose to the surface, and, with the help of the rough bargeman, laid her on the deck of the boat.

The barge glided out of the shadow of the lifted bridge, and Rupert, looking at the girl's face, saw that it was white and still.

"Throw me my coat," he shouted to a boy on the bank, and rolling it up, he made a pillow for the girl's head.

"I won't land here; she is too faint," he said to the man by his side. "Go on as you were going."

The crowd waited a little, but the bridge had been lowered again; it was getting cold and dark, and Dutch curiosity is quickly appeased. Soon Van Hals and his charge were alone under the shadow of the big brown sail.

The owner of the barge, leaving a boy—the only other human being on board—to steer, had gone below for some hot drink, for merely sprinkling water on her face failed to revive the fainting girl. Van Hals peered closely into her white face.

"She is like Holbein's Madonna," he whispered.

She was like Holbein's Madonna; the Madonna with the fair, gracious face, and the forehead rather higher than we think beautiful now. Her wet fair hair, not yellow, not very thick,—it is Magdalens, and not Madonnas, to whom the old painters give thick masses of hair,—strayed on her cheek and shoulder; and, looking at her, Van Hals trembled lest she should awake and be angry with him.

The Dutchman came up from the dark cabin, a red glow from a coke stove behind him, a brown cup of hot Schiedam in his hand. The two men contrived to make the rescued woman taste a little. She opened her eyes.

"You are quite safe," Rupert said; "you are in a boat, I will take care of you." He spoke English fluently, better even than most educated Dutchmen, for his mother was English.

"Please put me on shore," the girl said, after a pause, during which she had seemed to understand where she was.

"What does she say?" asked the bargee in Dutch.

"She says she is not well enough to land yet," interpreted Van Hals, with a gloss of his own.

The English girl tried to move, but was evidently injured, for she fainted again from the effort, and this time the two men tried in vain to restore her.

"You must find a doctor," said the squat captain of the barge, a little tired of the monotony of gazing at an insensible woman, whose beauty was at best not florid enough to suit his taste.

Van Hals lifted his head and looked round him. He could see far now, for the bank of the canal was only a few inches above the water; they had left the lock-like walls behind them, and drifted into a less populous part of the city. The clatter of wooden shoes or the rattle of a hand cart now and then broke the stillness; in front of the boat no bridges were to be seen crossing the faint gray streak of water.

The boatman pointed with his thumb significantly to a wisp of white vapor which hovered over the canal in the dim distance.

"There's the ague-snake," he said shortly; "if you are not frightened of it, I am, and I am going down to my fire."

At this moment Van Hals caught sight of a gleam of brightness almost like a spark, and saw that it came from a barber's brass bowl, quaintly built into the wall of a house by the canal side. He knew it well, and that it was two hundred years old, and had been in the family of the man on whose walls it shone all its two-century lifetime; once it hung outside a barber's shop and showed that men could be bled there, now it indicated to its owner's satisfaction, if to that only, that the barber's shop had developed into a surgery.

"Stop, when you can," said Rupert; "we shall pass a surgeon's in a moment, and I will take her out there."

"I can stop easy enough," laughed the boatman gruffly. "I thought you were the sort to be frightened by the ague-snake."

And he brought the barge to the edge of the canal, and grappled her by an iron ring to a stake driven into the bank. Van Hals put money into his hand, lifted the English girl in his arms, and carried her, not without difficulty, across the rude pavement to the doctor's door.

A flight of four stone steps, deep-worn in the center by the tread of feet for many years, led to the door, but iron hand-rails on each side prevented Rupert carrying the girl up, so he stood there panting, and shouted. The door opened instantly, and a little fair man, with the nearly white hair peculiar to some Dutchmen and Germans, was by his side at once. By a

gesture he indicated how Van Hals was to help to carry the girl, and never opened his lips until they had her safe in his little surgery.

Then going to the door he called in a harsh, guttural voice, very loudly, "Daatje!"

A small woman, with a woolen comforter completely concealing her features, came at the call, and received some brief directions in a low tone; then the surgery door was shut, and Dr. Isencraw approached his patient.

"What have you done to her?" he asked Van Hals abruptly.

"Saved her from drowning, and apparently broken her arm," answered Rupert, half smiling.

No further questions were asked as the doctor very gently, and with a tenderness of touch that contrasted almost ludicrously with his speech, unknotted her wet white kerchief and cut her sleeve.

The soft green stuff of her dress fell back from an arm so firmly molded that but for the faint blue veins at the wrist, it might have been carved in marble.

"She's strongly made," said the doctor.

She moaned faintly, and Van Hals started forward, indignant both at Isencraw's unpoetic comment and at his having apparently hurt the woman.

"Lift her shoulders, Rupert! I won't try and rouse her yet; the pain will wake her presently. Come, stir yourself!" For Rupert was simply kneeling on one knee, holding the girl's limp hand as if it were a saint's relic, and taking no heed of the words addressed to him. The surgeon laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Why, you are wet too, sodden! you'll be ill on my hands in another half hour. And you are no use here!" he muttered, going to the door and opening it. "Daatje!"

The call, with a prolonged stress on the first syllable of her name, brought Daatje as before.

"Take Mr. Van Hals upstairs; light the fire and give him some brandy hot, and make him have a bath as hot as he can bear it; then come down here."

Daatje took Van Hals by the arm, in spite of remonstrances on his part. "Let me help you, Isencraw," he pleaded.

"Just what I was going to do until you hindered me," growled the surgeon. "I'll call you when she's right again. Go and have your bath, if you don't want to be dead in a week."

Van Hals yielded with the better grace, because certain chill shiverings had warned him that even youth and strength cannot long resist, especially in Holland, exposure to evening airs in wet clothes. So he followed Daatje meekly, and standing by the fire in the doctor's dressing room watched the homely form of the Dutchwoman bending over the bath, and listened with an amused inattention to her constant chatter, as she spoke out of the hot steam, and as if thawed by its influence.

He was just wondering vaguely whether any of her remarks called for an answer when Isencraw's voice, in a prolonged shout, like a steamboat captain calling into the engine room, froze the thawing current of Daatje's words, and relieved Van Hals of her society.

CHAPTER II.

RUPERT VAN HALS was a philosopher; at least so he said, though I am not sure that a man is the best judge of his own philosophy. What he chiefly prided himself upon, was a capacity to take life easily; but, after all, this is more a matter of constitution than of conscience. He assumed that it is philosophical to keep one's troubles in the background, forgetting that he is only half a man who dare not turn and face them, and that there is some difference between bearing a burden without complaint, and shifting it on to other men's shoulders. Not that Rupert's troubles were very serious at present, and in his own mind they might be summed up by the statement that he was the son of his father.

His father was a German and a soldier. Rupert was a Dutchman, as he was a philosopher, by his own assertion, and hated Germans with a Dutchman's hatred.

Also, he declined to be a soldier.

Old Van Hals had been seriously wounded in his first engagement, had left the army a lieutenant, married an English wife, settled in Amsterdam, and made up his mind that his son should climb to the top of that military ladder from which his own foot had been unwillingly withdrawn. This the son positively refused to do. Indulged by his mother, neglected by his father, vaguely led to believe in great wealth in store for him, Rupert van Hals threw his whole soul into art, for which he had sufficient talent to enable him to avoid hard work—and hard work would have

saved him. As it was he painted a little, modeled a great deal, and spent much of his time in dreams of a future when he should be rich by his father's money and famous by his own genius. Unfortunately the amount of Lieutenant van Hal's money was an unknown problem to which his son in vain endeavored to find a clew. The old man was absolutely silent on the subject; he neither boasted of his wealth nor deplored his poverty; but he kept his son on a niggardly allowance, and never stinted himself in anything, so that any seed of prudence which he sowed with one hand he roughly uprooted with the other.

And Rupert's mind did not present a kindly soil for seeds of prudence; he fancied he saw a motive for his father's niggardliness, and believed he was kept short of money lest he should pay a substitute instead of personally going through his training for the army. This was to some extent correct, and bitter was the old man's disappointment when an English uncle left Rupert a couple of hundred pounds, and the dreaded substitute was paid. This widened the breach between the two beyond healing; the son had not only disobeyed his father, but had overreached him; he might have rebelled, and been forgiven if he had failed, but there was no forgiveness for success. Rupert's English mother had died some years back, and there was no one to bring together the two men who had filled her little world; they lived under the same roof because it was cheaper; they met occasionally without anger, indeed with indifference, but each was a thorn in the other's side.

So Rupert van Hals asserted that he was a Dutchman chiefly because his father was a German, and

proclaimed himself a philosopher to excuse his indolent endurance of a somewhat galling position.

In Dr. Isencraw's dressing room he proceeded to prove his philosophy by quietly carrying out all the doctor's orders, and his nationality by lighting a cigar.

At last he ventured to put on his half-dry clothes, which had been steaming before the fire while he sat in his friend's dressing gown ruminating on his evening adventure, and to go downstairs. Below, as he paused on the staircase, he saw a true Dutch interior. The surgery door stood open, an oil lamp, somewhat dim and old-fashioned, and two candles lighted it. The English girl, pale still and exhausted, leaned back in a great armchair, Daatje's concerned brown face close to her white one, Dr. Isencraw's figure, black and haloed, was between the lamp and the door.

As Rupert entered, the English girl raised herself a little, and with a grateful flush on her cheek, said softly :

"I think you saved my life, sir."

"That was nothing," Rupert answered hurriedly, and flinging his cigar on the fire ; "any man would have done the same."

"Perhaps so," said the girl, with a quiet smile; "but I should like to thank you."

"Ah," said Dr. Isencraw, turning abruptly, "Miss Prosser has been trying to tell me at which bridge she fell, and I cannot quite understand. Which was it ?"

Daatje's face was a study at this moment, and Rupert watched it as a man watches the faces of the jury during a judge's charge, to see if it will be well with him. Her mouth was drawn down at the corners,

and in her eyes was the look of the schoolboy who has once been caught and punished himself, and who sees a companion in the same case. She was evidently full of fear, and of fear for Rupert. He glanced for an explanation at the doctor, and met his eye, grave, inquiring, and with the gleam of a coming triumph in it, and knew himself detected.

"Oh," he began, as he walked round to the fire, "it was one of the drawbridges; you see the bridge lifted, there was a crush, and——"

"We know all that," said the doctor dryly, the gleam in his eye becoming a twinkle; "Miss Prosser —my patient—has explained; I only want to know which bridge it was at."

"It was not far from the Amstel—I don't know the name of the bridge. What does it matter?"

"Simply that there were nearer doctors, in that case, my dear fellow, and you ran some risk from delay."

"Well, the bargee was a surly fellow, and I could not get him to stop, and—and——"

"Just so," replied his friend, and added in a low voice and in Dutch as he came near to him, "I did not think so seriously of you at first, my boy, but self-condemnation is a very bad sign. Don't plunge deeper in the mud by struggling."

Rupert muttered something about "beauty" and "artist" and "model," but gave in without attempting further explanation. He knew he had done a foolish thing, and would only make himself ridiculous in the eyes of his prosaic friend if he confessed that he had spent nearly an hour on a barge, in wet clothes, merely for the pleasure of gazing on a beautiful stranger, whose face had enthralled him.

"Do you think I may go home now?" asked the English woman quietly, diverting Dr. Isencraw's attention from Van Hals. "My aunt will be very anxious, I fear."

"Let Daatje call a *coupé* or a conveyance of some kind," broke in Rupert, "and I will see Miss——?"

"Prosser," said Dr. Isencraw.

"Miss Prosser home," concluded Rupert, annoyed that he had to appeal to another for her name.

"*We* will see Miss Prosser home," his friend said, with a most provoking emphasis on the first word, at which Van Hals was so angry that he would have left the two to go without him, but that he would have been unable in that case to find out the stranger's address.

A carriage was called and the doctor approached his patient.

"You must not attempt to go down the steps alone," he said, and at the same time Van Hals, in silence, offered her his arm. The girl looked from one man to the other. The surgeon, with his flaxen hair, his slight, almost boyish figure, his shining spectacles which obliterated any expression his eyes might hold, was to her a kind, though brusque, professional man; Rupert, his chestnut locks flung back from his forehead, his handsome face turned eagerly toward her, while his bright, clear, gray eyes looked defiance at Isencraw, was a knight-errant, a mystery, a champion. She thanked Isencraw quietly, but she took Van Hals' arm.

The three drove slowly through deserted streets, f the most part in silence, because the noisy paven stopped conversation, the surgeon supporting

patient as well as he could lest the shaking should hurt her. As the carriage crossed the stone canal bridges, with their steep ups and downs, the pale face of the injured girl grew paler, and she was afraid she might faint again. The strangeness of her position was in some way a strength to her. The long gleaming strips of water in the center of the streets, the shadowy trees that darkened the way, ghostly sails of boats, the very smell of the town, that peculiar Dutch smell which is caused by the fuel burned,—a kind of peat,—all reminded her that she was in a strange land, and must bear herself bravely as a Devonshire girl should.

It was a relief to feel the carriage stop, and to recognize her aunt's house, with steps up to the seldom-used front door, and steps down to what in her ignorant English simplicity she had at first called a cellar, but which was a wonderful shop running the whole depth of the house, and full of cigars of all brands, and tobaccos from all countries. It was brilliantly lighted as usual in the evening; there stood her Dutch uncle talking to and smoking with his customers; and as the carriage stopped, her aunt, a Devonshire farmer's daughter like herself once, but now to all appearance as Dutch as her adopted country, hurried out full of questions and alarm.

And so began the acquaintance of Rupert van Hals and Myrtle Prosser, a bud which was to ripen into that bitter-sweet fruit which life offers to some of us that we may take it, and gives to some whether we will or no.

CHAPTER III.

THE long, low room which Myrtle Prosser had thought a cellar, and which stretched from the street in front to the canal behind her uncle's house, had a celebrity of its own in this quarter of Amsterdam.

It was in some sort the barber's shop of the district. For Amsterdam is not a desolate waste or a great hive (according as a man looks at it) like London; its merchants have leisure and inclination for gossip still, but instead of meeting at the barber's, as in old days, they assembled at Anton Secker's cigar shop and talked over the news of the day. The shop lay close to the Kalver Straat and the Exchange, and about two o'clock what was more pleasant than to lounge in after luncheon and try one of Anton's cigars? They were noted even at Rotterdam and The Hague, and bland Anton Secker was as proud of them as if they had been his children, or his old blue china. His ancestors had lived in the same old house for two or three centuries, and in the days of barter with England had acquired at small cost some wonderful china, and also some real Chippendale furniture.

These were Anton Secker's relics, to be shown and sold only to the faithful.

Of late the shop had gained an additional attraction for the younger men, who did not think an evening stroll complete without a visit to Secker's. It had transpired that Anton's wife had a pretty niece staying there.

For Myrtle, ignorant of the etiquette of the town had innocently walked past the Exchange and dow

the Kalver Straat at two o'clock, an hour when, as all Amsterdam knows, no lady under five-and-forty ventures into the merchants' quarter. She noticed that the steps of the Exchange were black with the crowd of eager merchants, talking, smoking, laughing, and, as she soon discovered, turning to look at her.

It was not until she was halfway down the Kalver Straat, whose splendid shop windows almost dazzled her, that her solitude oppressed her—she was the only young woman to be seen!

That evening Anton Secker's shop was besieged.

The stout and placid Dutchman stood rubbing his white hands in the doorway, and greeted each man who came rather as a guest than as a customer. He spread his boxes of cigars on the counters which flanked the shop, and took the sums, small as well as large, that were paid, with his own hands, and then the men began to talk.

"Well, Anton, how is trade?" began one; but another, more impatient, and knowing by experience that the fluctuations of trade were an exhaustless topic, inquired:

"Wait a minute, good Anton, how is Frau Secker?"

This was much more easily answered; the wife was very well.

"By the by," said the first speaker, cleverly following his friend's lead, "she is an Englishwoman, I am told, Anton. Who would have thought it!"

"She was English when I married her twenty years ago; she would have been very stupid if she had not become Dutch by this time," remarked Secker, to whom the subject was not interesting.

"Ah, but, Anton, look here,—let us see your Eng-

lish niece before you turn her into a Dutchwoman; it will be charming to watch the process, you know."

"She will not be here long enough," gravely replied the cigar merchant; "she is only with us for a few weeks."

"May we make her acquaintance before she goes?" pleaded both young men.

"You may make her acquaintance to-night, for that matter," answered Anton stolidly; "but if you hope to please her you are mistaken. She is like the rest of her countrywomen, and looks at Dutchmen as if they were cabbages."

"I'll be a cabbage from this moment," cried the more impulsive of Secker's two questioners, "if she will only look at me."

But Anton was already leading the way down the shop, and paid no attention.

He opened a glass door, on which a red silk curtain concealed the room beyond, and disclosed, seated at work, his wife and her English niece. He shut the young men in without a word and returned to the shop.

Two Englishmen in a similar position would probably have been shy and awkward, but the Dutchmen, asking that their cigars might be excused, as one would say "Good evening," without waiting for an answer, seated themselves and began to talk. It was Myrtle's first real experience of Dutch life, and it was as delightful as it was unexpected. Class distinctions are but faintly marked in Holland, and her aunt chatted as familiarly with these two young men, one of whom she knew to be the son of a wealthy banker, as if her husband were buying instead of selling cigars

on the other side of the glass door. Myrtle was a little shy at first, but the absence of any of that prudence or prudery, with which an unacclimatized Englishwoman would have kept watch over a pretty niece, set her at her ease, and she was soon talking as merrily as anyone.

Every evening some of the customers of Anton Secker found their way through the glass door, but Anton exercised more supervision over their entrance than at first appeared, and many discovered that the placid cigar-seller had a will of his own which he could assert on occasions.

He had no high opinion of English productions, from women down to china, but since he had specimens of both in his house, he was not going to make them cheap by showing them to any man who asked him.

For a fortnight Frau Secker's sitting room was invaded by her husband's younger customers; then came the evening of Myrtle's accident, and for another fortnight, during which time her niece was upstairs, the old *habitués* resumed their places round her table.

It is wonderful how a middle-aged Dutchman or German will sit with his plump hands folded on his broad knees, occasionally drinking coffee, and talking on the simplest and most domestic matters to a woman of his own age, and corresponding plumpness, who never raises her eyes from her knitting, and only responds by an ever-recurring, "yes, yes," at lengthened intervals, like the expected fall of dropping water. By Frau Secker's coffee-table, while Myrtle's injured arm was curing itself quietly in the seldom-

used drawing room close to the rarely opened street door, sat three or four men of this type, substantial merchants in more senses than one ; and talked, one of his little son at school, one of his daughter's trousseau, another of the dismissal of his best assistant in the large linen draper's shop of which he was master. Then Myrtle's recovery was pronounced sufficiently advanced for her return to her aunt's sitting room, and again the young men drove the middle-aged gossips from their places, and Frau Secker knitted on and took no notice of the change.

But one man noted the change, and this was Rupert van Hals.

It was only natural that he should call to inquire after the girl whose life he had saved, and when he did so he always went up the white steps instead of down, attacked the front door boldly and asked for Miss Prosser herself. He did not see her very often, but it was very dull in the stiff and rarely used guest-room, where Myrtle sat by the window watching the passers-by, and counting sometimes to amuse herself, the number of men who raised their hats in passing without looking up—to the house, as her aunt told her : and for very relief from dullness now and then Rupert was admitted. Their *tête-à-têtes* were not long, for the Secker's was a hospitable house, and a cousin, or a cousin's cousin, or a friend, was pretty sure to drop in to "cheer" Myrtle—and interrupt conversation.

Dr. Isencraw too, once having found Van Hals there in the evening, had a knack of calling just when he was not wanted, as Rupert said to himself; but still they met, and the Devonshire girl and the Dutch-

man talked a language which is the same in all countries, and the knowledge of which comes by instinct, when it comes at all, and neither knew it at first for the language of love.

It may be imagined that when Rupert called one evening, and was told that Miss Prosser was below in a room the only entrance to which for an outsider was through the cigar shop, he was almost tempted to wish she might fall and break her arm again.

However, he tried to assume a careless air, lounged into the shop, bought a cigar, talked to his friends, several of whom assailed him with questions about his now well-known rescue of Secker's English niece, and finally asked permission to see Frau Secker.

"Humph!" grunted Anton, as he let him pass; "I never knew my wife so much sought after before. I shall have to be jealous if this goes on much longer."

At which small joke, the only one the stout Dutchman had ever made, there was a roar of laughter from the bystanders. Van Hals heard it, and being both self-conscious and thin-skinned, thought the laugh was against himself, and bit his lip with annoyance as he closed the door. He was destined to be further annoyed that evening, for it was some time before he could get near Myrtle. At last he pushed his way to her side, taking advantage of a general move toward a Prussian whose candid out-speaking on the subject of the Fatherland was amusing the men present.

"Frau Secker," he said, bowing to her, "there is the best military concert of the season to-morrow evening: the air is as soft as summer and much purer. May I have the honor of serving as escort to you and Miss Prosser?"

"It can hardly hurt you now, my dear," said the good aunt, to whom an evening's entertainment was a rare treat; "we can keep out of the crowd, and take care no one pushes against your arm. I think we can go; it will do you good, and I love a military concert. But we must have a fourth," Frau Secker added, in the most matter-of-fact tone in the world, and raising her voice a little, "Who cares to go to the Gartenfest to-morrow?"

Two or three candidates offered themselves, mostly elderly men, for the younger ones saw that Van Hals would monopolize Myrtle. Frau Secker graciously and calmly selected one, and the whole thing was concluded.

Van Hals would have preferred less publicity in the arrangements, but consoled himself by thinking that at all events the cigar-dealer's wife was free from the suspicions which seemed to fill the mind of Dr. Isencraw.

It was with delight tempered by a little fear that Myrtle Prosser saw the gayly lighted garden where the concert was to be held. It looked so like the Continental wickedness which her good mother had painted (purely from imagination) on her daughter's leaving England for the first time. The soft-colored lights on the trees, which hardly disturbed the privacy of the long dim walks, leading out into darkness on every side; the little tables dotted about the garden, and scattered thickly over a raised platform sheltered from the damp evening air; the moving concourse of men and women; the hum of talk, and then suddenly in the distance the stirring sound of military music, half frightened while it charmed her.

She wondered what her mother and her brother would say in their quiet Devonshire home if they could see her at that moment, and kept close behind her aunt, as if Frau Secker's broad shoulders were a shield against some danger of which she only knew this—that it was un-English.

"We will have our coffee first," said Frau Secker, making her way with discrimination to a small table well-sheltered from the wind, and nodding to little family groups of her acquaintance as she passed.

"You have nothing like this in England, miss?" asked the stout man who made the fourth of their little party, addressing Myrtle in broken English.

"Oh, no!" Myrtle answered, looking in bewilderment at table after table surrounded by father, mother, children, and generally an aunt or cousin, and loaded with a heavy tea-pot (for the Dutchwoman likes to make her own tea), massive plates of bread and butter and cakes, and relieved by a glass or two of beer for the men of the party.

"Ah, the climate," said the Dutchman, as if he must apologize for having referred to so great an omission from English life.

"The climate! not a bit of it," cried Frau Secker. "You don't think England is as damp as Holland, do you? They get no ague there, except in the fen-country, and could sit out of doors till midnight as far as that goes; no, it's not the climate. It is only because an Englishman, at least when he's got his family with him, must always know who he's sitting next to. It comes of being an island, I have been told," added the cigar-merchant's wife solemnly; "but it is very uncomfortable."

"Will you walk a little?" asked Rupert, when coffee was over, and the conversation of the two substantial chaperons was becoming tedious; "the music sounds better by the water."

"You can walk, my dear," said the good aunt, whose portliness was that of her adopted country, and made exercise a penance. "Herr van Hals will show you the garden, and we will sit here, is it not so?"

She turned to her friend, who nodded a response; he, too, disapproved of walking.

This was just what Rupert wished, for he wanted to have Myrtle to himself. He was a little disappointed in her manner lately; her first shyness had worn off, and was succeeded by a frankness with which he quarreled, because it was not reserved exclusively for him. It was true that her eyes kindled as he told her his hopes and ambition as an artist; but then he had seen her apparently equally interested when Dr. Isencraw prosed (as Rupert expressed it) about his grandfather's rise from blood-letting to surgery, and described with wearisome iteration the characteristic brass-work of the basin built into the house wall to remind his descendants of that same rise. Then, although she was never tired of hearing about his clay-modeling and his terra-cotta statuettes, he fancied that her interest centered on the art rather than the artist, and to a man who was himself the axis on which his world turned, this was inexplicable as well as unsatisfactory.

"Tell me," he said, as they walked under the trees, and the strains of music, now softened by distance, made a dreamy accompaniment to his voice, "where

did you get the name of Myrtle? Is it a common English name?

"I never knew any other woman called as I am," Myrtle answered; "but it may be common, though we never hear it in Devonshire. My father gave it me just before he died. My father was an old man when he died, and my mother was his second wife. She is a clergyman's daughter, and her family did not like her marrying a farmer; but she was very poor and my father loved her, so she married him. The only thing she brought to her new home was a great myrtle tree in a pot, and my father loved the tree, and said if he ever had a daughter she should be called Myrtle. So when he died a few weeks after my twin brother and I were born, my mother remembered. Poor mother! she says she never loved him enough when he was alive, and she was so glad to have something to do for him."

"What is your twin brother's name?"

"Harvey; it was my mother's maiden name."

"And is he like you?" asked the young man, who always found Myrtle gentler when she talked of home.

"He is more like my mother: he has bright blue eyes and yellow hair and rosy cheeks, and looks younger than I do; you see I am so tall," the girl ended, with a sigh.

"You are nearly as tall as I am, Myrtle," Van Hals said; it was the first time he had called her Myrtle, and his voice dropped so that perhaps she did not hear it; "and your eyes are wine-colored, golden gray like Tuno's. You are like Tuno, I think now, though I used to think you like Holbein's Madonna."

"It is time to find my aunt," said Myrtle, instinctively, though almost unconsciously, on her guard against any approach to tender speeches. "Oh, there is Dr. Isencraw!"

"Where? I do not see him. How quick you are to recognize him in this darkness," said Van Hals pettishly.

"It is the darkness that makes it easy. His spectacles shine like the lights at the end of a train. Good-evening, doctor!"

"Ah, Miss Prosser! I did not see you. Good-evening, Van Hals. Are you wise to risk your arm in a crowd?" the surgeon asked, turning to his patient.

"We have not been much in a crowd; Mr. Van Hals took me down some quiet walks," answered Myrtle, and Isencraw frowned as if that did not make the case much better.

They all walked home together. Dr. Isencraw was talking to Frau Secker about an escort he had heard of for England, and Rupert on whose mind a suspicion suddenly struck like a splash of cold water, crossed a bridge with Myrtle instead of following the party, and walked on the other side of the canal.

"Where are we going?" asked Myrtle.

"I want to show you the lights on the water, and the moon behind that dark windmill," answered Van Hals. "I want to ask you: for whom does your aunt want an escort?"

"For me, of course."

"For you! You are going home! So soon, and you never told me? That was not like a friend."

"I did not think of it," Myrtle said, and the answer

pleased Rupert as little as the omission it would have excused.

"You do not care for Amsterdam," he cried angrily, and walking with such quick steps that the girl by his side could hardly keep up with him. "We have done all we could to please you, and you will forget us in a week!"

"I shall not forget," Myrtle said quietly; but she made no further protestation, and would have crossed at the next bridge to their own side of the canal.

"No, no!" exclaimed Van Hals, annoyed at her coldness; "you shall not go home yet; you must tell me first that you will think of me sometimes, that you will care for my fame, that you know I shall think of you."

But Myrtle walked on in silence.

"Look!" she cried at last, as they passed a lighted clock; "it is nearly ten; you must take me home now."

"That clock is not right; here is one that makes it twenty minutes earlier; here again is another that varies—we cannot go by these."

"They may not be absolutely right, but they point near enough to one conclusion," the Devonshire girl said, with a half smile. "You would be rash to assert it is noon."

"I should not think of such a thing," her companion answered; "that would be childish."

"You know what I mean," the girl said gravely; "there are rules which have been made for years and years; they may not be perfect, but they are good guides, and if you disregard them you do so at your peril. Mr. van Hals, I *will* not walk any longer with you."

Rupert looked at her heightened color, and followed her without a word.

At her aunt's door she held out her hand, in English fashion, and said good-night.

"Why were you angry just now?" Van Hals asked, venturing to hold it a minute.

"Because you took advantage of my being English; you would not have led a Dutch girl, whom you respected, away from her friends, and it annoyed me. Good-night!"

Perhaps it pleased her to see her power over him, for though her words were stern her tone was very gentle, almost pleading, and Rupert was not sorry to be so scolded.

"I will not offend again," he said; "but tell me you will think of me a little; and—and you will not marry Isencraw?"

Myrtle snatched her hand away, and ran up the steps to the house.

"He has not asked me," she said, laughing, and Rupert went away perplexed.

CHAPTER IV.

MORNING restored to Rupert his philosophy. It was quite unlike him to think so much of any woman's opinion as he had allowed himself to do of Myrtle Prosser's. In fact her great attraction in his eyes—at least so he told himself—was that she was a stranger in a strange land. One or two Dutch maidens had caught Van Hals' fancy, but they had homes and mothers in Amsterdam, and he had always before his

eyes the shining surface and silver edge of the betrothal papers, which would make public, and to a proud man irrevocable, his lover's vows.

But with Myrtle it was not so; the Seckers kept an easy watch over their niece, and the unknown mother in England, only a clergyman's daughter and farmer's wife (the former distinction counting for less than the latter to Van Hals), need not trouble him.

He could make love to Myrtle with impunity, and when he was tired he could ride away. Unfortunately he was not tired, and he began to fancy that Myrtle might be, so, with a wisdom on which he prided himself as a sign that he was still his own master, he determined to keep away from Secker's cigar-shop for a week.

What a long week it was! Toward the close of it he haunted the picture galleries, the shops, the market, and visited, as it were by accident, every place where he fancied Myrtle might be seen. In vain; he did not see her once. Fate had taken him at his word, and favored him by carrying out his expressed wishes, and he was not grateful.

At length the slow days wore themselves away, and Van Hals, picturing to himself how Myrtle had taken his absence, allowed his steps to turn out of the Kalver Straat to the cigar merchant's shop. He went early, for he did not wish to be in the crowd that assembled for their daily dose of gossip at two o'clock, so he was but little surprised, being a native of Amsterdam, to see the street door wide open and a torrent of water rushing across the stone hall and making a small cascade down the steps. The Aquaria who guided the torrent soon followed, walking on a species of wooden

stool tied to each foot, and driving the water before her by means of a broom, which she wielded with great force and precision.

Van Hals could not possibly come up the steps and did not wish to shout his question from the roadway, and he glanced hastily at the window to see if his undignified position was observed.

No one was there. It was necessary to say something; it could not be supposed that he came merely to see the steps cleaned.

"Is Frau Secker at home?" he asked, for he did not wish to inquire for Myrtle.

"She'll be back to-morrow," said the rosy Dutch girl, whose smiling mouth reached from frill to frill of her starched cap.

"Where is she?"

"At Rotterdam."

Rupert dashed through the torrent into the hall.

"At Rotterdam? Where is Miss Prosser?"

"Her aunt took her to the boat, sir; she's gone home to England, I believe."

"Has her aunt gone to England?" Rupert asked breathlessly.

"Oh, no! the mistress is to stay with friends in Rotterdam; she's to be two days away."

"Then who is with Miss Prosser?" and the young man took some silver from his pocket and put it in the girl's hand. "Is she alone on the boat?"

"I'd have told you without money," the Dutch girl answered, but slipping the silver into her apron pocket all the same, and brushing the hall between each phrase. "I don't suppose there's anyone with her,—she can look after herself, I should think,—her

uncle's not gone, for he is at home,—no, there's no one with her, sir,—except, of course, the doctor."

"Of course, the doctor!" He might have known it! It was a plot to get her away from himself, to throw her constantly into Isencraw's society; and he had played into their hands. The only thing necessary for the success of their scheme was his, Rupert's, absence, and this he had himself arranged!

He hurried to Isencraw's house, realizing for the first time, as he measured the canal's length, how far he had brought Myrtle in the boat the night he had saved her life.

"Quixotic fool!" he muttered, giving himself a few hard words. "No wonder Isencraw thought me an easy dupe."

"Where's Isencraw?" he asked roughly, as Daatje opened the door.

The doctor was away in England, Daatje said; and in answer to questions, told him the hour of his departure, and many details of his packing up, last breakfast, and probable choice of food on his return. To all of which Rupert listened unheeding, and in the midst of one of her most edifying descriptions, gathered himself together, and walked moodily away. His pride was bitterly wounded. He had met with indifference at the hand of the woman he admired.

It was Rupert's first experience of the kind, and salutary as it might be, it was not pleasant.

Fascinating to women, popular with men, gifted with an intense love of the beautiful, sensitive to music, Rupert van Hals possessed a nature which is seldom self-denying, and which as yet had looked at life only on the sunny side. His accomplishments,

his handsome face, his winning speech, procured for him constant invitations into the best society of Amsterdam ; among his artist friends he was a little king, his want of money the only thing to trouble him, and now he was to be slighted by the English niece of Anton Secker.

He pulled his mustache remorselessly over his lips as he walked, and bit at it fiercely ; it was intolerable to think of the men at Secker's talking over his discomfiture. They knew Myrtle was going home ; they must have known, and he had not been told !

Walking mechanically, he found himself at his father's house, in one of the best streets of the town. Entering, he went down a long, narrow passage to his studio, a room built out into the garden by some former owner. He unlocked the door, and pushed it open slowly and thoughtfully. The shutters were closed, for no one was allowed to go into the room in Rupert's absence, and lighting a lamp, he showed ghostly and shrouded forms of half-finished statuettes, and here and there a completed work in terra-cotta. Van Hals opened a shutter, and the daylight fell on a small figure modeled in pale clay of some kind, of a lady in rich dress, the lace on which was exquisitely delicate ; a critic might have complained that the work wanted strength, but its beauty could not be denied.

As Rupert let in the sunshine, he uttered an exclamation of dismay ; the cloth that covered one of the unfinished busts was stiff and dry ; he had not entered the room for a week, and there was no one to keep it damp in his absence.

Pulling at it somewhat roughly, the cloth caught

round the throat, the hard and brittle clay broke off at the neck, and the head fell in pieces on the floor.

It was a study from memory of Myrtle Prosser, as Daphne.

The accident was his own fault, and might have been prevented, but it was the final touch to his misery. While he stood, looking at the broken clay at his feet, emblem at once of disappointed hopes in fame and love, the door behind him opened slowly, and a man's head appeared.

There are moments of supreme pain when the one thing beyond endurance is a witness. Rupert turned on the intruder like a tiger.

"What are you doing here?" he said fiercely. "Leave me alone!"

The sight of a white head, and dim eyes that peered at him, only angered him more, for it was his father's valet who stood there, and who was hated, like a tax-gatherer or an undertaker, not on his own account, but for his errand.

"Your father's been asking for you," the old man said meekly.

"Leave me alone," Rupert repeated, making a quick step forward, on which the white head was withdrawn and the door shut.

The young man shot a bolt that fastened the door, and returned to the dry and broken clay.

After a time, the artist—for Rupert was an artist in his heart—went slowly round his studio, and lifting the covers off his work, looked at it for the first time as a judge.

Some of it he broke up, but without anger; some

he left untouched; on one statuette of a child he poured water that he might work on it another day.

Then a bell rang sharply through the house, and Rupert, who knew its meaning, unbarred his door, and lighted a cigar.

The white-headed valet shuffled timidly with the handle, and then ventured in; Lieutenant van Hals wished to see his son.

Rupert left his bare room, with its sanded floor and strip of matting by the fireplace, and locking the door behind him, passed along a corridor and through a softly-closing baize door into that part of the house which was peculiarly associated with his father.

The atmosphere here seemed different; the wide staircase, built between two walls, held at every turn a scented plant in a wooden stand, while double felt deadened the sound of footsteps. Rupert walked slowly, for the old valet was in front of him, and he noted each small luxury as he went.

"He never denies himself anything; he must be wealthy," the son muttered, and then a ray of light fell on the stairs before him, and he saw the servant holding open the door of his father's room.

Lieutenant van Hals was a shrunken but well-preserved man of close upon seventy. His gray eyes looked keenly from under eyebrows which had been thick once, and were still shaggy, with a few abnormally long stiff hairs which gave a Mephistophelian cast to the upper part of his face. Little streaky red veins marked his cheeks; his mouth was feeble, the lower lip hanging loosely unless he was annoyed, when the worn-out muscles seemed to pull it with a jerk into a self-assertive pout, whence it fell presently with

the added weakness of contrast. His dress was younger than his face, the straggling hair of his thin gray whiskers falling on a velveteen coat, one sleeve of which was cut open and tied with small bows of ribbon.

The old man had been seriously wounded in his sword-arm in his second engagement; the arm had been neglected, the joint had stiffened, and it was useless. It was possible to get a sleeve over the bent elbow, but not easy, and the old lieutenant was not sorry to wear an open sleeve to show that his short service had been no inglorious one.

When his son entered he sat with his back against a white porcelain stove, in which some fuel was burning, though the day was warm, for the lieutenant, between age and ague and lack of exercise, was always chilly.

"I rang for you some time ago," the father said sharply.

Rupert bent his head, not disrespectfully, but as one who knows that words would be wasted.

"You will oblige me, Rupert, by looking after your own affairs in future—you are not a schoolboy."

"Have I any affairs, sir? I am not aware of it."

"I presume it is your affair," said the father, his lip working angrily, "when your paid substitute comes begging here, and lays his misery at your door."

"I thought he was in Java," Rupert said, awaking to interest.

"He has been to Java, but the climate got hold of him; he will never be of any use in the world. It is bad policy sending men to Batavia to be poisoned, and then let loose on society; it would be a different

matter if they were killed outright," old Van Hals said pettishly.

"What does he want with me?" the son asked.

"He wants everything; money chiefly;" and a grim smile slowly traced itself on the old man's lips. "It appears he married just before you were wise enough to pay him to take your place in a noble profession, and thereby give him a hook to hang on you with until you die. He left his wife for your money's sake, and while he was away she died, giving him a child to work for on his return. So down in the Jews' quarter somewhere—Paul has the address—you will find a sick child and a broken-down soldier as pensioners; that's all I wanted to say." And the old martinet tapped a shaking hand nervously on the table, impatient of his son's reply.

Rupert looked steadily at his father, his eyes traveling thoughtfully over the well-known face as if in search of something. He had determined to make one appeal to the old man, and he was trying to read in some softened line of the selfish face a hope of success.

"It has always been a theory of mine," he began, somewhat unwisely, "that parents would do well to take their sons into their confidence, at least in money matters."

A strange expression, partly suspicious, partly sneering, crossed the lieutenant's face.

"A most interesting fact, my dear Rupert," he laughed, but the laugh was a forced one. "I have often been told that the theories of the rising generation were singular, and now I believe it."

"Understand me, sir," his son said eagerly, "I do

not wish to know what your wealth may be, but I think I have a right to ask what mine will be in the future."

"Indeed," said his father dryly.

"I have been brought up to expect riches."

"And by whom?" interrupted old Van Hals fiercely.

Rupert felt this was not the moment to speak of his dead mother, so he only said:

"At least I have been brought up to see luxury around me, sir. If I must work, tell me; if I may wait a little and follow my own bent, before Heaven, sir, I will earn my money in the end."

"By selling pictures—in frames; by selling statuettes on velvet stands, like an Italian street boy in London. Bah! the Van Hals family has never soiled its hands by trade;" and the loose lower lip gathered itself ominously up, and hid the upper one.

"My mother's family——" stammered Rupert, wounded by the cruel speech.

"Your mother's family is not my family; also your mother was English. English trade is good to marry into. I have no objection to your marrying a rich and beautiful English girl—or she need not be beautiful if she is rich; *but*, I will apprentice you to no trade."

"Is that my answer, sir?" Rupert said, rising to his feet.

"That is one answer, and this is another. When did you do anything I wished? I wanted you to be in the army; you refused. I thought you were only a boy, and that your man's pride would lead you right. I waited. The year came for your compulsory ser-

vice, and I fancied your coward blood would kindle when you saw the military life, and that you would ask me to make you an allowance worthy a soldier; but no, you pay a half-starved Jew to take your place, and all my ambition for you is over! Do you call yourself a son for a man to have confidence in?"

"I think I might have been a different son in that case, sir; but as you will. Is that all you wish to say to me?"

"Yes,—no, it is not. I will give you one more chance. You know my farm near Drock? The manager is old, as old as Paul." He touched a bell on the table, and the old valet entered, "Paul, give me the English *Times*—it is in my bedroom."

Paul put it by his master, and at a sign remained in the room.

"There are two courses open to me," continued the old man, "to sell the farm, or to get a new manager. I have decided to get a new manager. I offer to put you in as manager, after a year's training."

Rupert was about to speak, but his father, reaching his hand for the *Times*, silenced him by a gesture.

"The training required is best got in England; I therefore advertised in the English newspaper, and this morning I received an answer. You can read it."

And the lieutenant gave Paul the *Times*, and an open letter, indicating by a nod that they were for his son.

"This is paternal government with a vengeance," cried Rupert, more amused than angry, as he sat down by the table to read the letter.

"Ah! I suppose you prefer filial government—it is

one of your theories, I have no doubt. Well, it may come some day, but not while I am alive."

The advertisement merely asked that a gentleman's son should be trained in all the duties of a farm manager in a year.

The letter, written in a bold round hand on blue paper, was short. The writer undertook to train a young man in such work as his farm could supply, stated that he had never taken anyone to train before, and that a fair price seemed to him to be one hundred guineas for the year, the stranger to be boarded with the family.

He signed himself "Caleb Prosser."

Rupert read the letter carelessly until he came to the name; there he paused, and it seemed as if a hand caught him by the throat. Prosser! it was Myrtle's name. But she never spoke of Caleb—her twin brother's name was Harvey, for Rupert remembered well all she had told him; still it was not impossible that some uncle might manage the farm for her mother. He looked at the heading of the blue sheet. "Red Hill Farm." Yes, it was hers; she had told him of the hill at the back of the house, where the iron stream trickled down and reddened the grass and stones. And slowly over the young man's face the crimson blood mounted, until he sat covering his brow with his hands, gazing at the dancing letters on the page before him, and absolutely unconscious of his father waiting for his answer at the other side the table.

She was his fate; no Isencraw should come between them; he would follow her to England and win her.

Then with resolution came memory. He folded the letter, and gave it back to his father.

"I am ready to go to England when you will, sir," he said, and turned and left the room.

CHAPTER V.

CALEB PROSSER, whose name had made Rupert von Hals suddenly submissive to his father's wishes, was the half-brother of Myrtle, and the eldest son of stout John Prosser, who for more than forty years had ruled like a king in Red Hill Farm. For four generations the farm had passed from father to son without dropping a field; the ambition of the Prossers being to live as their fathers had lived before them, wronging no man, providing for their own people, and leaving no debts; which, as ambitions go, is no ignoble one. John Prosser came to his kingdom early in life, and found himself master of Red Hill Farm at twenty-one. There had been no bachelor at the head of the farm since the Prossers bought the land and improved the house, so John chose a strong, healthy woman of a good Devon family like his own, and married her.

Five children were born to him, and then when he was barely thirty, his wife died, and John Prosser was left to marry his girls and settle his boys alone. And alone he remained, not from any ideal faithfulness, but simply because his strong nature required neither prop nor sympathy.

Years passed, his children were scattered; some were dead; one was beyond seas; Caleb—the eldest—managed the farm under his father. Then when the sturdy

farmer was nearer seventy than sixty, and was apt to turn a little dizzy when he stood on harvest cart or hay-rick, he began to think about taking another wife as he would think about building a new barn, and for much the same reason, to make things comfortable.

He said nothing of his intention to his son, but trudged over the Red Hill at the back of the farm oftener than usual to play a game of draughts with Parson Harvey.

Parson Harvey was curate of the next parish, a lonely hamlet on the edge of a moor, whose rector's sole connection with it consisted in the regularity with which he drew his stipend minus the hundred pounds deducted for the curate-in-charge.

Mr. Harvey was a studious man and a scholar, so nervous that preaching save to a simple country audience was keen pain to him; he therefore accepted his position in the Devonshire hamlet cheerfully, read old sermons to the sleeping rustics, and added to his income by writing mathematical treatises, compiling chess problems, and teaching a pupil.

John Prosser was his only companion. They met first on market days, and began to talk about books, for the lonely farmer spent his long winter evenings in reading everything he could lay hands on. Mr. Harvey made him free of his library, and the two men met weekly for years, to talk strange politics founded on theories, neither having the least practical experience, and to play draughts.

The two men were strongly contrasted. The curate's thin stooping figure in its threadbare coat of clerical alpaca looked like a shadow beside the burly farmer, "six foot two in his stocking-feet," as he was

proud to tell you, and measuring only half an inch less than he did in his old wrestling and boxing days. Sometimes Fanny Harvey, the curate's only daughter, could hardly see her father for the farmer's broad shoulders.

It was natural that when John Prosser determined to take a wife to nurse his old age, he should think of Fanny Harvey ; indeed it is possible that her gentle step as she carried the books he wanted from the shelves to her father's table, and the dainty way she had of giving each man his cup of tea, first suggested the idea. However this might be, John did not let it die, but after doubling his visits for a month or two, and once or twice coming when he knew the curate would be out, he put his stout arm round Fanny's little waist, kissed her cheek, and asked her to come to church with him. It was the way he wooed his first wife, and he knew no other form, but it was done with gentle respect, and Fanny did not complain.

Then a thing happened which was totally incomprehensible to the proud and simple farmer. The threadbare curate flew into a passion at the idea of his daughter marrying the master of Red Hill Farm. John had expected opposition on the score of disparity of years, but that Mr. Harvey should be indignant at any disparity of position surprised him too much to make him angry. If the truth were told, to John Prosser's mind the clergy were but "a poor lot who brought many children into the world for other men to keep," and if he had respected Parson Harvey it was for his scholarship and not for his priesthood.

So with his gray head held high, and a red spot on each weather-beaten cheek, he would have turned in

disdain from the curate's door, but for the white face of the curate's daughter. Her dilated, frightened eyes, as she heard her father's harsh and angry words, went straight to the farmer's heart and put him on his mettle. Parson Harvey's house might be shut against him, but a Devon moor was wide enough for a man to meet his wife on, and with what he meant for a reassuring nod to Fanny he whistled to the dog which waited for him and went his way for a time.

Parson Harvey laid stern commands on his daughter, but to his surprise she rebelled. All the curate's hopes had been bound up in a son of great promise, who died of brain fever while working for a scholarship; he had trained the boy, and could have pointed to his success as his own work, and his death was a blow to a father's pride as well as love. For girls he had a profound contempt. Fanny was taught music in order that she might play the harmonium at church, but for all other learning she was indebted to her brother when he came home. So she knew a little Latin, and the Greek alphabet, had tried to learn Euclid by heart, and had read all the poets in her father's library.

Her father was stern and hard to her, her life was gray and lonely, but she was twenty-five, and had day-dreams of her own; and now when Mr. Harvey scornfully bade her remember her position and be too proud to be a farmer's wife, she looked at him with eyes wide-opened to keep back the welling tears, and spoke:

"But, father, I am not proud; I should like to be happy just for a little while. It is very lonely here, and,"—she paused a moment, for she was afraid to say

what must be said,—" and—if you were to die, father, what would become of me?"

"Providence, my dear, would raise up friends for you," said the curate dubiously, as if his faith lagged behind his words.

"We have no friends but—but Mr. Prosser," said Fanny, below her breath.

Then her father's anger burst forth, and she was forbidded to mention the farmer's name again.

She was very desolate, but disobedience would never have occurred to her as a possibility had not Mr. Harvey in a weak moment sent for his only unmarried sister to keep guard over Fanny. "I am not trusted," the girl muttered to herself.

The Devon moor, as the farmer had prophesied, was wide enough for their meetings; some men are more romantic in old age than in youth, and opposition kindled John Prosser's ardor; besides, he was not accustomed to be kept waiting. One summer Sunday Fanny Harvey was up betimes, had crossed Red Hill by Caleb Prosser's side, and been married by license at the parish church while her father and her aunt were eating their breakfast.

She was a happy wife, but for all that, the farmer knew the love was mostly on his side; and when he was carried home, mortally injured by a kick from a restive horse, six weeks after his twin children were born, there was a wistful pathos in his face as he said to his wife, "You need not fret, Fanny, the children will comfort you." It was true; the children comforted her.

John Prosser was laid to rest by his first wife, and Caleb, his son, ruled in his stead.

It was a strange household. The young mother with her two children, and her stepson five-and-forty when his father died.

Caleb never married, and the four lived together through prosperous years, only marked by seedtime and harvest, and by the growth of Myrtle and Harvey.

The harmony which reigned at Red Hill Farm was greatly due to Mrs. Prosser, who was, as her stepson said, an easy woman to live with. She was one of those women who from the day they become wives merge their identity in that of their husbands, and from the day they become mothers merge their existence in their children. To Fanny a Prosser's will was law, and when her husband died, Caleb took his place in the household, a master to be obeyed. She was just the woman to suit men like the Prossers, masterful and self-reliant, and Caleb, though not so self-assertive as his father, was, in his silent way, quite as absolute. He managed the farm, carried out his father's will, written and expressed, and only condescended to explain his plans when it suited him. Hence it came about quite naturally, that all the negotiations with Lieutenant van Hals respecting his son's stay at the farm were concluded before a word was spoken to Mrs. Prosser about the matter ; the verb to consult was not in Caleb's dictionary.

It was harvest time, and Mrs. Prosser was alone in the house laying the table for supper ; the women were helping in the big wheat field, which being on the swell of a hill, lay all exposed to the west, and a storm was rolling up, Caleb said. Myrtle was about in the garden, feeding her doves and watering her flowers, for her mother could hear her singing through

the open lattice-window, but she did not come in, and Fanny Prosser noted her absence and fancied that lately the girl was a little changed.

"Tired, Caleb?" Fanny asked, as her stepson entered.

"A bit," answered the man of few words, throwing himself heavily into a chair as large as an ordinary bedstead, which stood by the fireplace, and had belonged to Caleb's grandfather.

"Is the wheat carried?" Mrs. Prosser continued; she always asked questions, and Caleb answered them or not as it pleased him.

"There is only one load to get in, and Harvey will see to that. We sold the strawberry colt last week, and they've fetched him-to-night—Harvey's seeing to their beer. Where's Myrtle, Fanny?"

"I heard her in the garden before you came in. Do you want her, Caleb?"

"No, no! it 'll do when she comes. I'm thinking my father had best have had two lads, after all;" and the farmer filled his pipe, with an ominous shake of the head. He spoke as if the sex of his children had been the subject of consideration with John Prosser, and he had graciously consented that one should be a girl, but his stepmother did not resent the imputation, she only looked at him in dismay.

"You see her changed too, Caleb? I've thought so ever since she came back from Amsterdam; I wonder if Aunt Secker noticed it."

"The Seckers had never set eyes on her before; Fanny, you forget they cannot know what the girl was like. Why you let her go I never could tell. Mrs. Secker's only father's cousin, for all we say aunt to her."

"I thought, Caleb," Mrs. Prosser answered with awe, "I thought you fancied your father would have liked it; I'm sure I never——"

"Well, well, maybe I did; don't fret, Fanny," he replied graciously. "It's not Amsterdam that worries me; but the girl's too like my father for a girl. Look at Harvey, he's got your blue eyes, and he's as gentle and biddable as a woman, and he is a strong young fellow too; but Myrtle, bless me! she's more like your sister than your daughter; she's ordered you about many a year, and if I don't take care she'll be ordering me."

At this moment the twins entered, and the mother, looking from one to the other with worshiping eyes, owned in her heart that Caleb was right. In features, the brother and sister were much alike, although even in their strongest likeness there was a difference, Harvey having the more rounded, Myrtle the more chiseled features, but in coloring they were very different. Myrtle's eyes were golden-hazel, but Harvey's were blue; Myrtle's cheeks were of a creamy paleness, but her brother's were like the stripling David's; and where her hair was dusky his was yellow.

"Where have you been, child?" Mrs. Prosser asked her daughter, and as she turned her face you saw where Harvey got his gentle mouth and flaxen locks.

"Harvey had not come in, so I waited, mother; besides, I had to say good-by to Strawberry. Heigh-ho! I wish horses need not be sold."

"Why, Myrtle," said Caleb, vexed, for though Harvey was the apple of his eye, yet Myrtle ruled him, "if you had said so, the colt should have been kept."

"No, no, brother!" the girl said, smiling, "that would never do; it is not Strawberry in particular, it is all the colts, and the calves, and everything on the farm. Why, I was even sorry when you sold the black pigs on Tuesday."

"Ah, there now I agree with you," Caleb rejoined innocently; "they were a splendid lot and no mistake—black diamonds every one; but a colt, and a strawberry colt too, I never guessed you could have cared."

"Bless you, Caleb! it's not the color of the creatures," Harvey broke in, "it's because she loves them, that's all. We shall have the farm overrun if you listen to her."

"That is what I say, Harvey; I know they must go, but I wish they need not; in your place I should sell them myself."

"Accept the inevitable," said her brother.

"Accept the inevitable, and accept nothing else, that is my motto," cried the girl.

"Just like her father," said Mrs. Prosser, with a half sigh. "Do you remember, Caleb, when we all went to Bagstock Mill Fair, and one of those men who tell your character by your head was there? He felt your father's head for long enough, and then he said, 'Mr. Prosser, you are one of those who, when the doctor tells you your leg ought to be cut off, will never wait to lament over it; you'll only say: Cut it off then.'"

"Of course," Myrtle said, seating herself by the supper-table, "my father was right. Take the best things you can get as long as you have strength to win them, choose for yourself and live while you can,

but when the inevitable comes, don't stand struggling, die and have done with it!"

"What things you do say, Myrtle!" said Harvey, stroking her hand fondly; "you startle us more than ever since you have been to Holland."

"That reminds me, Fanny," said Caleb, setting down a great tankard of ale, which he had just emptied, "we shall want one of the spare beds aired next week; I've got a pupil coming."

"A pupil; you, Caleb, never!" cried Fanny, whose only notion of a pupil was the raw and backward boy whose neglected training was completed by her father.

"Not one of those Parson Harvey used to take, my dear, but a farm pupil. What do you say to a fat, flat-faced, roundabout Dutchman, Myrtle, pounding over the ten-acre behind Harvey and me while I explain the rotation of the crops?"

Myrtle and Harvey were chatting in low tones together, but she looked up puzzled.

"Seriously, Caleb——" began Mrs. Prosser.

"Seriously, Fanny; my father never did it, I know, but other farmers do, and times are worse than in my father's day, and money does not go so far. I saw an advertisement and I answered it, and the boy is coming."

"The boy?" said Myrtle. "When?"

"Next week, I think. It's the right time of year," he added, turning to Harvey. "His father only gives him a twelvemonth, so I told him he had better come when the harvest was carried,—as soon as one crop's out the farmer begins getting the land ready for the next, or pretty nigh; then he'll see all the year round."

"Yes, yes!" assented Harvey; "do you say he is a Dutchman?"

"His father writes from Amsterdam, and he is to manage a Dutch farm. I know no more."

"How old is he?" asked Myrtle, woman-like.

"I do not know. Not so young as he ought to be by his wits, as far as I can make out. One of those dolts and dunderheads, I fancy, from what his father says, who fail at everything, and then try farming;" and Caleb gave one of his rare chuckles of amusement.

"What is his name?" Mrs. Prosser asked.

"His father is some swell or other to judge by his crests and mottoes and his fancy paper," and Caleb opened a bulging pocketbook to find the letter in question. "Also, more's the token," he added, with a wink at Harvey, "he beat me down from guineas to pounds, which looks as if he had more blood than cash, to my thinking."

"Did you come down?" Fanny ventured to ask.

"The Prossers are too proud to haggle, my dear," Caleb answered in a tone of reproof; "for that matter, the lad is welcome to his bit of bacon and his board free if he likes, only farmers must live."

"Well, tell us his name, Caleb; Myrtle may know the family," said Mrs. Prosser, burning with curiosity.

"Myrtle may know his grandmother! Do you suppose the girl knows all Amsterdam, Fanny? You are as bad as my old shepherd, when I went to London two years back, asking me if 'I'd run agin his brother.' Well, here it is, v-a-n, with a small V,—what's that, Myrtle?"

Myrtle's heart gave a thump, involuntary and unex-

plainable, and she came and leaned over her half brother's shoulder.

"Mr. van Hals—yes, I do know the name," she said quietly, and then a quick flush dyed her cheek, and she grew very angry.

They plied her with questions, and she answered them, but she could, or at least she did, tell them little about Van Hals and nothing about his father, and soon the talk drifted into ordinary channels.

Myrtle waited until the candles were lighted, and then she slipped away, and stole out of doors to the very bounds of the garden. A wooden gate led out into a field, separated from the garden by a low wall. Here Myrtle leaned her arms, turning her face to the gray west, whence a soft warm wind blew in stormy gusts; there was no sound but the hum of bees which hurried in and out of the straw hives on the other side of the wall, uneasy at the threatened storm. The girl was angry with Van Hals for coming. Not that she disliked him,—she wished she liked him less,—but it seemed as if he pursued her, and thought she would be willing to be pursued. Her annoyance on the subject of Rupert had begun in Amsterdam. Dr. Isencraw had taken upon himself to warn her, and she had resented, not so much the warning, as her supposed need of it. No high-spirited girl likes to be told that she is letting herself be too easily fascinated, and this was what the doctor had implied. After meeting Rupert and Myrtle at the garden concert, Dr. Isencraw had spoken somewhat seriously to Frau Secker about the responsibility she incurred in letting her English niece grow sentimental over an idle artist. The consultation had taken place in Dutch, and in

low tones, but it was held in the curtained room beyond the cigar-shop and Myrtle had been present, listening apparently to the compliments of two or three of her admirers.

But compliments are easy to listen to, there being a sameness about them which requires little attention to comprehend, and the English girl had picked up a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to enable her to form a shrewd guess as to the subject of her aunt's colloquy with the surgeon. Frau Secker was not a diplomatist, and when she told her visitor that night that Dr. Isencraw had business in London, and would himself be her escort home, Myrtle could read in her face that she expected disappointment if not resistance, and perplexed her aunt by her quiet acceptance of the surgeon's offer.

Still, though Myrtle made preparations for departure, she had not counted on leaving Amsterdam without a word of farewell from Rupert van Hals, and her pride and curiosity were piqued by his non-appearance.

She could not resist a question to the doctor as she stood on the deck of the steamer, and after turning to take a last look at Rotterdam, watched the low green banks glide away from her, and the gray water in front grow wider, until some of the dull monotony of the landscape seemed to pass into her heart and make her melancholy. She realized suddenly that she was going away ; that if she would know anything of her friend she must ask now, or hold her peace always. So, in that tone of would-be unconcern, which we all use in like cases, and which deceives no one, not even ourselves, she asked, and—the doctor improved the occasion.

All this she remembered, as she stood in her mother's garden with the soft night wind blowing warm on her face.

She had been angry with Dr. Isencraw, angry with herself that such a thing had power to vex her, and now she was angry with Rupert. Why was he following her? That he came purely by accident she did not suppose for a moment, and he would not have dared to come unless he assumed that she would welcome him.

But she would not. He should be met neither with warmth nor coldness, simply with indifference. And having arranged this little programme satisfactorily, she went back into the house. Her plan was like those guides for conventional etiquette, which, after giving the most minute rules for one's guidance on disconcerting occasions, conclude by saying, "above all, do not be embarrassed," when it is only our embarrassment that makes us need the rules. She had decided that she would receive him with indifference, but what if indifference were beyond her power?

CHAPTER VI.

RUPERT'S enthusiasm on the subject of learning farming cooled rapidly. Dr. Isencraw returned, after taking Myrtle to London, and answered all Van Hals' questions simply enough; and relieved of a fear of a rival, Rupert dismissed Myrtle's haunting face from his mind, and turned to Art, his other goddess, with ardor quickened by self-reproach. Van Hals had never been a steady worker; for weeks he would not

touch clay or brush; then, an inspiration seizing him, he would spend days in his studio, grudging the time given to food and sleep. Hope and despair came to him much in the same way, and often for no reason. But about this time he was wildly hopeful, and thought at last he saw the distant flutter of Fame's robe.

Walking one day in the Keizer's Gracht with Isencraw, with whom he had struck a sort of friendship, Van Hals saw the doctor raise his hat as they passed a house, and looking up found a subject for a picture ready posed. The house was large and handsome, but its door opened in the homely way so often seen in Amsterdam, being divided horizontally and the upper panels swinging back alone. Framed by the open doorway, her olive skin set off by a dress of rich Eastern stuff in which orange and crimson were cunningly blended, stood a woman whose blue-black hair and melting eyes spoke of Spanish blood. She was leaning back a little in shadow, and did not see the two men. But Van Hals, impulsive as usual, caught Isencraw's arm, and urged him up the high steps to the door. Isencraw looked annoyed, and would have retreated, but at the sound of footsteps the lady turned her head and at once relieved the doctor's embarrassment.

"Ah, you come to see my father," she said, opening the lower half of the door; "that is kind, but he is better to-day. His rooms are so warm that I came out for a breath of air—it is tropical in there." She advanced as she spoke to a rich portière, which she swept back with a queenly gesture, and stood there holding it up with rounded wrist waiting for Isencraw to pass.

"Will you see him now, doctor?" she asked, in a tone that commanded rather than questioned; then as the doctor entered the room, she dropped the curtain and turned to the stranger: "And you, sir, will you follow, or stay here with me in the cool?"

"I will stay with you here," said Van Hals, and though he had almost repeated her words, there was something in the sound of his voice which said, "or anywhere so it be with you."

"Come," the Spaniard said, "we need not stand almost in the street, the inner hall is still cool." And she led the way up some marble steps, and through a softly swinging door into a kind of vestibule in which were plants and Indian wicker seats, and which was lighted from the roof by tinted glass.

"Your friend did not give me your name," and as she spoke his hostess seated herself, and a bullfinch flew down and settling on her shoulder nestled against her cheek; "but there was no need; I know it already—you are Rupert van Hals."

"Yes," said the young man, surprised, "but how——"

"I will tell you. You know the small modern collection of art in the Kalver Straat: I was there one day and I saw a tazza, a masterpiece of delicacy. Bacchus boys clung to its lip and hung garlands on it—garlands of roses, and clematis, and oleander blossoms, and all was wrought in clay."

"It was mine," said Van Hals, below his breath.

"Yes, it was yours. Will you know what I did? I am almost ashamed to say, for such gems should not be sold. But I wanted it, and there was no other way—I bought it."

The dark eyes were fixed on his, the rosy lips were caressing the breast of her bird, and across the mind of Van Hals, even as he listened to her, flitted the thought, "This is her way: she will want things or men's hearts, as may happen, and—there being to her no other way—will buy them, with money, or with flattery."

But though he thought this he was flattered, and replied in low tones, in keeping with the colored light and the flowers' scent and the Spanish woman's presence; while in his eyes was that admiration which she had noted as he entered the house, and which she never let pass without an instinctive effort to render the fleeting homage permanent.

"Since you cared for it, I am glad it is yours," he answered; "but will you honor me still further, and let me design you one that shall be a gift? It is what queens used to do to poor artists," he added, half with a smile, but still with some of the chivalrous homage to beauty of the time of which he spoke.

"As you will, and if you will come and place it yourself beside the first," the beautiful woman answered; then with a sudden change of tone, "But perhaps you will not come, for I am a Jewess; do you despise the Jews?"

The young man was reminded of a panther's spring, the change from languid indolence to defensive action was so immediate. The Jewess had raised herself from her lounging attitude, and when she asked if he despised the Jews, it was with a look in her eyes which defied, while it deprecated, his contempt.

Van Hals gazed at her, fascinated and puzzled.

"Despise," he echoed, "who could despise——"

"Jews such as I?" she cried, standing beside him, her magnificent form drawn to its full height; "with the oldest blood of Spain in my veins, with the beauty of Spain and not of Judea in my face, with untold wealth in my father's house—I grant you, no man! But, what about the men of my race in what you call the Jews' quarter here—men tolerated, as if they had no right to the air they breathe; relegated to one part of the town, treated with contempt until they become contemptible. What do you think of them!"

"I did not know the Jews had anything to complain of in Holland," Rupert said; "the days of persecution are over. Let bygones go."

"For a Jew there are no bygones," the Jewess answered; "for him the past is always present, urging him to revenge, and the future is present also, bidding him triumph. Are you a Christian?"

"Yes; I am a Catholic."

"We should indeed be enemies," this strange woman cried. "Spaniard against Hollander, Jew against Catholic; my race oppressed yours, your religion persecuted mine; I wonder why we met?" and throwing herself into a chair she sat musing with her head on her hand.

"To show that the old feuds are over," answered the artist.

"You think so?" she said quickly, raising her head. "Well, time will show. You will come and see me on your Christian Sunday; that is the day I receive my friends, and you will be a sculptor—am I not a prophetess?"

"I thought your nation did not encourage sculpture," answered Van Hals, hoping to rekindle the

flame of indignation in the light of which her beauty was so resplendent.

"Ah," the Jewess answered, "that, if you will, is a bygone notion; or at best is confined to our rabbis. Understand me, when I claim honor for the Jews, I speak of the nation, not of the religion. Jehovah chose the Jews to be the favored nation, not arbitrarily, but because they were the kingliest. But the old creeds are worn out, or hidden under Rabbinical maxims. A world-wide philosophy is the Jew's dream for the future."

"And sculpture?"

"Sculpture? I had forgotten that. Art fades into insignificance beside philosophy, does it not? But you must be a sculptor," she added, resuming her former winning manner, "and in marble. I like the purity of white, colorless form; that is why I prefer sculpture to painting. We Spaniards seem to have color round us always. But, I hear your friend. Well, doctor?" And standing at the top of the marble steps, the smile of triumph on her lips was visible only to Isencraw—Rupert could not see it.

"You here still?" the surgeon asked; "I had no idea you were waiting for me."

"I was not waiting for you," Van Hals answered, glancing at the Jewess.

She had taken her bullfinch on her finger, and with a question to Isencraw, "You found my father better?" and a graceful bend of her head, she passed through a door at the end of the inner hall, and left the two men to find their way out.

In the street Isencraw began to laugh.

"Your artist fancies are all very well, Rupert, but

why should you force me to pay an unnecessary visit to an unwilling patient? I have lost half an hour, and yet I shall not have the face to charge it in my bill."

"Who is she?" asked Van Hals, unheeding.

"Daria Leon, only daughter and heiress of old Leon, the Jew usurer, the richest woman in Amsterdam."

"The Jew usurer?"

"Yes, my dear fellow; are you dreaming? Leon the Jew, whose name is a tower of strength on the Exchange; who has lent money to crowned heads; who buys rare pictures and hangs them on his walls until he finds a purchaser to his mind. Leon, Leon, Leon; all the town talks of him, and do you mean to say you never heard his name?"

"I never knew he had a daughter," Van Hals said gravely, as if to himself.

"Oh, that is it, is it? The sky may fall for all you care, so long as that particular bit of blue on which your window has an outlook holds its place. So Leon the non-existent may henceforth take his place in your consciousness because he has a daughter! What isolated individualities we are! Leon's daughter has smiled on you, has she? Well, my advice is, forget the fact as soon as possible. She is no friend for a struggling artist."

"She has bought my Bacchus Tazza."

"Oh, I don't say that she will not patronize you, if you let yourself be patronized,—she will buy your work, but she will paralyze your power."

"Nonsense, Isencraw, my power is my own," said Van Hals lightly, and added in a different tone, "She is very bitter against Christians."

"Well, she is bitter certainly, but as much against her own people as against Christians. She hates to belong to a despised race, and is angry both with those who show contempt and those who make contempt possible. The Señora Daria is a curious study—not that I recommend you to study her," said Isencraw, with a glance at his companion. "Her father claims to belong to some princely family of Spanish Jews, and vows his daughter shall marry as befits a Leon. She, too, says she will only give her hand to a Jew as well born as herself, and he seems hard to find; she has been wooed often for her beauty and her gold, but the men for whom she has shown preference are Christians, and she has a way of making them forget that that is a fatal objection, until too late."

"Too late?"

"Too late for them, I mean; they love her, and she seems as if she loved them; then they speak, and she—well, she laughs, I believe, generally. They cannot turn Jews for her; she will not turn Christian for them. Only last month I was called in to see a young man who had shot himself for Daria Leon, and he was not the first."

"It is hard if a beautiful woman is to be responsible for every beardless boy who kills himself because she smiled at him," said Van Hals, shrugging his shoulders, and the two men parted.

Of course he went to the Jew's house on Sunday, and on many Sundays, but he did not love Daria Leon. Her beauty, and her way of speaking fascinated him; above all, her praise intoxicated him. When she spoke of his work, admired a vase or a

statuette which he brought to show her, or painted his future in glowing colors, he listened entranced. But she was quick to see that he cared more for her admiration than for her love; that he flushed at her praise not because it was hers, but because it might become the world's. He was indifferent to other women—she tried him. She asked beautiful women to meet him at her house, that she might console herself by noting his neglect of them. She invited men whom she had once admired that she might please herself by seeing his superiority to them all. But there was an end to her power over Rupert which chafed her: she could wound his pride by disparaging his work, she could not provoke his jealousy by talking to other men.

He learned in time that she was most sanguine about his future when they were alone, or separated from her other friends, and when he talked softly to her, and caressed the bird on her wrist, or begged a flower from her hair. And so, perhaps unconsciously, he began to use almost a lover's manner to her, that she might praise his art; and she on her part, but all too consciously for her peace, praised his art that she might win his love.

For Daria Leon loved Rupert van Hals with the passionate love of her blended races, and knew it as such a woman must know it; and said to herself—not that she would die for him (as love sometimes says, not dreaming what death means), but that she would rather he died than that he were not hers.

So the summer wore away, and Rupert building castles on Fame's fairy mountains, thought little of Myrtle Prosser, and worked with feverish energy all the week that he might have something to take to

Daria Leon on Sunday. In August his father went to Ems, and, more gracious than usual at his son's tardy consent to be guided by paternal counsels, he offered Rupert rooms at the fashionable watering-place. The young man went, glad of some excuse to leave Amsterdam, and think.

For he could not think at home, with the chains thrown round him by the Jewess fettering his freedom, and the fascination of her presence drawing him back again and again into an atmosphere of enervating praise, which unfitted him for the very work it lauded. If his father would have helped him in any other way, Rupert would have given up the idea of farming, but he knew the lieutenant too well to hope he would change any plans he had announced definitely. Besides, a man must live, and art would not as yet keep the young sculptor's soul and body together. During his stay in England he could study nature, and surely a farmer had many idle hours on his hands during which he could let his genius have its way. Then he pictured to himself the deep Devonshire lanes of which Myrtle had told him, and thought he should like to see his pale-cheeked Madonna again. Was it possible, he asked himself, with a smile such we give to bygone weakness, that he had thought of marrying the farmer's daughter? And now here was a wealthy and beautiful woman ready to throw herself and her wealth at his feet if he would! But would he? He thought not; there was the difference of faith. Christians did marry Jews, but not often, and that world-wide philosophy of which Daria spoke did not seem as if it would help the case much. So, while his father took the waters at Ems and built up his constitution pre-

paratory to a winter in Holland, Rupert drank in the air on the top of the hills, and braced himself for a year's patient study of nature in a Devonshire farm-house.

September saw father and son back in Amsterdam.

The Venice of the North was at it dreariest, its stagnant canals were malodorous, its rich inhabitants had taken flight, tourists who knew no better wandered in its streets and stared at the faded goods in the shop windows, wondering that they should have diverged from the beaten track to Switzerland to see so dull a city.

Rupert had need of the mental tonic he had been taking, for his return brought him nothing but disappointment. As he entered his studio a large packing-case caught his eye, containing a statuette sent for exhibition and rejected. He went for consolation to the Jew's house in the Keizer's Gracht; the Señora was from home. Full of moody thoughts he walked on aimlessly. He entered a street of tall houses, which were warehouses on the ground floor, dwelling houses in the middle, but in the top story returned to a second childhood and became warehouses again, with cranes outstretching hungry arms over the street, ready to seize anything given into their clutch. Rupert thought bitterly that the many-storied buildings were like men, whose last years and those nearest heaven are often fullest of earth's lumber.

Crossing the street, he met a dealer who had sold some of his terra-cotta work, and the young sculptor greeted him eagerly.

"Well, how is trade?" he asked.

"Bad, very bad."

"Of course, everyone is away just now. Have you sold anything?"

"Nothing of yours, sir," said the man, with just that faint difference in his tone which indicated to Rupert that he considered he was no longer speaking to a successful artist.

"How is that?" Van Hals asked, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Well, there is so much of your work about, sir. A good judge came into my place a week ago,—he had bought a piece of yours last year,—and I showed him some more, but he shook his head. He said if that was all the power you had gained in a year, you would go down, and he would not buy. People are beginning to ask how long you are going to keep to clay, and when you will chip the stone."

"I am going away to study," the young man said huskily.

"I'll tell that, sir," the dealer answered, touched by the keen disappointment written on Rupert's face; "that will do good, and will give buyers confidence. It's got about that a piece of yours was rejected by the art committee for inaccuracy in the modeling, and—you'll excuse me, sir,—but I overheard that Italian who always ran you close in the public taste, he was talking to a friend in my shop, and handling one of your pieces, and he said——"

"Well, out with it, man! criticism is a bitter pill, but it's better than a surfeit of sweets."

"He said you were dangling after a woman, and that he was not afraid you would beat him now; that was all, sir, but they both laughed and——"

Rupert strode away from his tormentor without a

word. So that was what rivals said! and consoled themselves that his hand was losing its cunning! Had Daria, then, enervated him so much? It was true she had praised the very work which had been rejected because the modeling of an arm was faulty. As Van Hals pondered the events of the last few weeks, he felt that his detractors were right, and like a true son of Adam turned against the woman whose flattery had led him astray. It has always been man's prerogative to scorn the frailty by which he profits. He takes the apple held out to him, but when the aftertaste is bitter, he blames "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me."

Even when he in his turn acts the tempter, he is the first to spurn her who at his command becomes his slave instead of his queen.

A hard lesson, the harder, perhaps, because with its harshness is mingled justice.

For woman is, in her own realm, queen, and cannot abdicate if she would. "Whatever of best he can conceive, it is her part to be," and if she fails, her punishment is this, that he for whom she left her throne will leave her desolate at the foot of it. She is Light-bearer for both by the very nature of her more sheltered position, and if she lets the light she carries be blown out by the gust of his passion, or covered under the bushel of her own vanity, though they will wander in darkness together, he will reproach her that she, being his loadstar, had failed him, and, leaving her to grope for a lamp which there is no re-kindling, will struggle out of the danger alone.

Van Hals cursed in his heart the flattery he had courted. How weak he had been, he thought; and

while he scorned himself he was glad to make excuses for his weakness in reproaches of Daria.

As he reached his father's door, thinking always and thinking bitterly, a man started out of the shadow of the lindens, and planted himself before him. The sculptor would have pushed by him, but as he laid a hand on the man's arm a lean white dog at his heels growled ominously, and Rupert's nerves were just now strung too tightly to allow of his taking no heed.

"What do you want with me?" he asked, in a tone of irritation.

The man looked at Rupert with stern and hollow eyes, recalling vaguely a face he had known.

"I want money," he said, bidding the dog be quiet; "money for a starving child. You bought my life once, and you are bound to keep it. I am Kranz, Jan Kranz, whom you set in your place eight years ago, not caring whether I lived or died. I lived, worse luck for you and me, and I am here, a wreck—what you see me," and he held out a bony arm covered with sores. "How much will you give me?"

"I am not much richer than yourself, friend," Rupert said not unkindly. "You took your chance and made your bargain. You need not have served after the year for which I paid you."

"Need not? I lost my trade, my wife was sick, and I could not bear to see her pining face; they told me I should get high pay in Java, and I thought I must put her weary eyes out of my sight or I should go mad. They did not tell me the place would poison a man's blood, and make death welcome. And now the eyes I could not bear to look at are shut forever, and there is a child to keep—ay, and you'll keep it!"

he added, changing his wail to threatening, and clutching at Rupert's sleeve.

The sculptor gave him all the money he had, which was not much, and bade him come again in a week, then left him counting the coins in his shaking hand.

In a week—by that time he would be in England, and his father must give the man an occasional dole. It was true he had no claim, Rupert said to himself, but he had power to annoy, and his importunity added one more to the reasons urging a speedy departure for England. It was a scourge of small thongs which Fate used to goad on her victim, but it served its purpose better than a heavier whip.

CHAPTER VII.

BAGSTOCK MILL lay just at the dip of the moor whose summit was crowned by Red Hill Farm. Its one street was long and straggling, paved with round stones where it was paved at all, and running into its native simplicity at every opportunity.

It was full of life at five o'clock on a certain September evening, flaxen-haired children, geese, and fowls sunning themselves on its warm dry stones, which had been exposed all day to a cloudless sky; and neighbors chatting on the ale-house bench, now that work was done. Just in the middle of the street stood the inn and the church, facing each other and separated by the rough roadway, and, sitting on the low wall of the churchyard, swinging their heavy boots in rustic fashion, men and boys, whose work was over, waited the arrival of a two-horsed omnibus which

brought any passengers who could be found from the nearest railway station eight miles away. The season for tourists was nearly over; in another week or so, if the weather broke, the omnibus would stop running, and their link to the outer world would be severed for half a year. On a rough bit of grass close by the church, whence could be seen the old water-mill from which the village took its name, stood a farmer's cart and good gray horse. Harvey Prosser, in a gray smock and twirling a blue cornflower between his teeth, leaned against the horse's glossy shoulder. He, too, was waiting for the omnibus. At last it came, laden with luggage, and pulled up at the inn, and a foreign-looking man got out, wrapped in a long fur-lined coat, and after looking about him for some seconds went into the house. Harvey Prosser slouched slowly forward; he had been sent to meet Caleb's pupil, and not seeing anyone answering to his expectations, he came with country shyness to consult the coachman.

"I thought you'd have a Dutchman on board, Tom," he began, pulling his cap off and rubbing his hand through his yellow curls in perplexity.

The coachman threw the reins on the backs of his smoking cattle, and hollowing both hands about his mouth to produce the moral effect of a whisper, answered:

"A Russian prince, more like! All done up in fur as if it was winter. Go in and have a look at him—he's worth it. He ought to stand us a drink all round."

But here the landlord's voice was heard talking to the newcomer.

"Red Hill Farm, sir? A matter of six miles, and a hard road. Mr. Prosser's farm; yes, that's the name, and young Harvey, his half-brother, was about just now. Have any of you boys seen Harvey Prosser?"

There was nothing for it but to come forward, which the young farmer did a little sheepishly, to hear the handsome stranger say that his name was Van Hals, while he raised his hat in foreign fashion.

Harvey pulled his cap off too, and then held out his hand.

"They have queer notions of Dutchmen about here," he muttered awkwardly, "and I've brought the cart for you!"

A cart was not what Van Hals had expected, but he got into it, and saw his luggage stowed away behind, carefully superintending the strangely shaped packages appertaining to his profession.

They jolted up the street, and turned abruptly into a lane whose hedge-tops were above their heads, and finally found themselves on a rough road across the moor, where every cart rut seemed a small ditch, and every stone a bowlder, and where Van Hals had to cling ignominiously to the cart to keep his seat at all. The sun went down behind Red Hill, and Rupert was glad to pull his fur coat round him. The steamer from Rotterdam had arrived in the chill hours of the morning, and he had been traveling westward ever since, with but slight rest, and he was cold and tired.

Bashful Harvey summoned courage to speak.

"You must not think anything of Caleb sending the cart," he said, a sense of inhospitality weighing on his mind. "You see, we none of us knew you, except Myrtle, and she said nothing; and I bring it into

Bagstock Mill once a week for provisions, and we thought it would be just the thing. But Myrtle has got a pony-chay, and that would have done better for you."

"Not at all," Rupert said, in jerks, as an inexperienced horseman talks when his horse is trotting; "I want to be just like one of yourselves—only these roads are very rough, are they not?"

"My father made this road," Harvey said; "it is fairly good for Devonshire; it is not used often enough. This is where our land begins," he added, pointing with his whip to some fields on their left; "this lies the lowest and is the richest soil—up on the top, by the house, we get poor crops."

"Is your sister well?" Van Hals broke in, and Harvey answered,

"Yes, she's well," less cordially than he had before spoken, and then the two relapsed into silence. They were an incongruous pair, and had little in common, and Harvey was glad when a steeper hill than usual gave him an excuse for walking. Once on his feet by the side of Gray Darling, he forgot the stranger, and whistled shrill and clear in the twilight, while Van Hals thought of Myrtle and wondered why she had said so little about him to her brother.

In half an hour Red Hill with its fringing wood stood dark against the sky, trinkling rills made themselves heard in the stillness, mingled with an occasional bird-cry, and the joyful barking of welcoming dogs. Rupert's heart beat fast as they stopped at the garden gate, and he saw the creamy walls of the farmhouse covered with climbing roses, and smelled the lavender and sweetbriar in the garden, and heard

overhead in low trees the stir of roosting fowls. For one moment he let himself think of the Venetian-tinted glass under which bloomed stephanotis and oleanders in Daria Leon's rooms, and as he contrasted Myrtle's home with it he was content.

Caleb came out to meet him, his pursed-up mouth and twinkling eyes retaining and yet expressing his surprise. When Harvey had taken Van Hals to the best bedroom, which by some contrivance of Myrtle's had been prepared for him, Caleb confided unwontedly in his young brother.

"Well, here's a pretty kettle o' fish, and no mistake. A regular my lord ! That comes of buying a pig in a poke. What dost think of him, lad ?"

" I don't know," said Harvey slowly.

" You don't take to him, Harvey, I can see, and he does not look much like a farmer, I'll own myself. Never mind, we've got a half year's pay in advance with him, and we must keep him at present. You shall trot him over those two stubble fields to-morrow, lad, just to see what he's made of. Whist—here's your mother ! " and Caleb seized his pipe and a three-days-old newspaper, and retired to cogitate in his arm-chair.

Neither of the women had as yet seen the new-comer, and Mrs. Prosser was on the tiptoe of expectation, which changed to awe on his appearance. They all sat down to supper, and then Myrtle came in, and availing herself of her acquaintance with foreign customs, simply bowed as she took her place, but did not offer her hand.

Rupert noted everything ; the fine damask table linen better than that on his father's table, the massive

silver candlesticks which had belonged to Caleb's grandfather, as the farmer told him with some pride, and in a corner of the room a glass-case glittering with the paraphernalia of Freemasonry, for the Prossers had been Masons as long as they had been a family. He noted also Myrtle's studied indifference, but he was too old a sailor on the ocean of love not to know by heart all its varied storm signals, and he had found by experience that averted glances and short replies did not necessarily forbode adverse winds. So he left Myrtle to her own thoughts and talked diligently to Caleb and Mrs. Prosser.

It was hard work, for they were trying to find out all about him, and had not the art, which comes with mixing much in society, of concealing their curiosity. However, the first evening passed off as such evenings usually do, with a general sense of relief when the guest pleads fatigue and goes to bed.

Of course Rupert tried to make an opportunity for speaking to Myrtle alone, but for some days he had no success. At last one morning he found the door of the dairy open, and, peering down into its cool depths, saw Myrtle in the midst of great shallow crocks of cream.

In a moment he was on the brick floor by her side.

"You have never given me one word of welcome," he said. "Are you not glad to see me?"

Myrtle skimmed a flat spoonful of wrinkling cream with a steady hand.

"Why did you come?" she asked.

"Does whether you are glad to see me or not depend on why I came?" the young man questioned, with a smile.

It did; but Myrtle said nothing.

"I came, Myrtle, if you must know, because I never resist Fate."

It was her own doctrine dressed up in other words: Accept the inevitable. Myrtle had declared this to be her motto, and yet when she compared the two there was a difference. Our own doctrines, like our own vices, are almost unrecognizable in the house of our neighbor. She did not like passive non-resistance as well as active acceptance; and then, was Fate (so-called) inevitable?

"Why Fate?" she said, after a pause, during which she carefully examined the milk pans. "You advertised and my brother answered, that was all."

"That was all!" cried Rupert, triumphant. "It was not so in the least; my father put your brother's letter into my hand, and I knew nothing until I read his name. Even then—for you had never mentioned Caleb—I did not dream you had an elder brother, and thought I might still be mistaken in the family, until the address of Red Hill Farm caught my eye. Then I said I would come, and you are not angry, Myrtle? You left Holland without saying good-by to me, without warning me, and I was hurt at first; but when my father settled this, do you blame me if I said, Here is my fate—and came?"

He had skillfully carried the war into the enemy's country, and Myrtle turned her face to his to defend herself, but she could not tell him that only pride had made her leave Amsterdam without a farewell, and then his word *fate* was ringing in her ears, and a sense of all he meant by it, or of all it might grow to mean if it were to have any meaning at all, held her

speechless. She was thankful that her mother's entrance relieved her from the necessity of a reply. Only she could not help her heart singing gladly to itself as she went about her work, and though she did not very often see Rupert alone, yet he contrived to tell her of his visit to Frau Secker's when she had left for Rotterdam, and even to hint at his jealousy of Isencraw. Of Daria Leon he said nothing.

Autumn passed, for Van Hals, in shooting and fishing, with occasional lessons in the duties of a farmer at the fall of the leaf, and perpetual modeling of all the live creatures at Red Hill. His groups of horses were very spirited, and some of them may be seen in the farm to this day, where they stand ranged by the big trout that Harvey caught, and a white pheasant which Myrtle once found wounded in a copse, and all those trophies in glass-cases which may be found in every true country house, and which follow the fortunes of the family, until one day they fall in lots under the auctioneer's hammer and are sold to a curiosity dealer for an old song.

Winter came and Rupert seemed almost one of the family; Mrs. Prosser making much of him, and Myrtle's face taking that beauty which holds a prophecy of sorrow, and yet is so much more perfect than the unshadowed loveliness of girlhood.

Caleb said nothing of his thoughts about the stranger, and Harvey knew it would be folly to ask, though he often looked wistfully at his elder brother, but as he said to his mother when she press d him to find out her stepson's opinion: "Caleb is like one of his own cows, you must let him chew the cud long enough if you want any good out of him."

So Fanny was forced to wait or question the farmer herself.

The Prosser energy, for the first time in Caleb's case, had run to stoutness, and as winter advanced and was unusually severe, the master of Red Hill Farm was attacked by gout and asthma, the one coming out as the other went in, for all the world, he declared ruefully, like the man and woman in the weather-cot on the mantelshelf.

When gout kept his foot outstretched on the leg-rest which had been his grandfather's, but which his father had never been compelled by the generation-skipping disease to use, Caleb vowed asthma was nothing to it; but when the old doctor from Bagstock Mill drove the gout in, and the farmer's wheezing sounded all over the house, as if, as he said, the threshing-engine were kept indoors, he would fain have seen his old enemy back again.

The results of Caleb's illness were many; Harvey was constantly out of doors, the whole supervision of the farm resting on his shoulders, Myrtle and Rupert were thrown more together, and the sick man's temper, not soft at the best of times, became, as poor Fanny said, "trying."

One day when the leg-rest was in requisition and the threshing-engine temporarily out of gear, Fanny Prosser stood gazing from the window with a complacent smile upon her face. Her stepson was just in the mood to quarrel with a smile, and he asked testily what was the matter.

"Only Myrtle and Mr. van Hals taking the dogs out," Mrs. Prosser answered, with a timid glance at Caleb. "They are a handsome couple, though I say

it; she's as tall as he is, I do declare, or very nearly, and he would make a good husband, I'll be bound."

Alarmed at her own temerity, Mrs. Prosser turned from the window prepared for a scolding, but to her surprise Caleb was looking at her with eyes full of a strange fear.

"Fanny, Fanny," he said gravely, "put that notion out of your foolish head at once, and never breathe a word to Myrtle for your life. If I thought," he added, raising his right hand solemnly, "that deed of mine would make the child marry a foreign papist, I would cut off the cursed hand that wrote the letter to bid him come to the farm."

Mrs. Prosser was frightened; she had never seen Caleb like this, and tried to soothe him.

"Sit down, woman," he said, his face looking worn and the lines round his mouth deepening, "and talk to me. Is this a fancy of yours,—women, they say, are always matchmaking, though why, God only knows,—or have you seen anything in Myrtle to make you think she took to him, to yon papist?" and he jerked an angry thumb in the direction in which Van Hals and Myrtle had gone.

"I—I don't know, Caleb—you frighten me. Would you not have the girl marry?"

"I say nought against her marrying an honest farmer or a well-to-do countryman of her own county or near-abouts, a man we should know something of and his father before him—though mind you, Fanny, I'm not set on her marrying as you are; but to see the child link herself to this foreign fellow, to know that she might be breaking her heart in Holland and

her very mother none the wiser, and her father who would have shielded her, in his grave,—I tell you it would kill me!"

"Your father was not so hard upon papists, Caleb. He used to say: 'Let every man go his own way.'"

"You may let a man go his own way, without cutting your heart out for him," the gouty man said, stirring uneasily on his chair. "You don't understand me, Fanny. Twenty years ago, or nigh upon, when your twins were born, and you were singing over them in your happy way that he loved to hear, you knew nothing of what was going on outside your room. I mind as if it were yesterday the day my father got his death. The black horse—Black Eagle, we called him—had to be shod, and I was going to ride him down to the blacksmith's when father came out. 'I'll go, lad, I'll go,' he said, cheery-like, and I let him take my place. Do you know, Fanny, when he turned the corner by that dip on the copse, something told me he would not come back again, and I ran shouting after him, but the wind was in my face strong, and he never heard me, he never heard me."

"Caleb," said the widow, awed as she looked at her stepson's bent head, "Caleb, don't fret."

"You know the rest," Caleb went on. "Black Eagle kicked him at the forge, kicked him full in the chest; there was no hope for him, and no comfort for me, except in taking his place whose life was going instead of mine. He was conscious to the last, and we talked far into the night, while you and the children lay sleeping. 'You'll marry, Caleb?' he

said, his eyes reading mine. 'No, father,' I answered, for I knew well what he meant. 'Thank you,' he said, with a sort of quiet in his voice. He never doubted me, he trusted me, and all these years, Fanny, no man, or woman either, has had the power to say to you and your children that you had no place in the home."

"Why, Caleb!" exclaimed Mrs. Prosser, on whose simple mind had just dawned the fact that she had been living by the side of a hero all these years, "did you remain unmarried for us? I never thought—I never dreamed you cared; and yet when Rose Mitchell married, folks did say——"

"Let that be," Caleb said irritably; "a man's not worth much who can't stand without a woman at his side. My word was given to a dead man, and there's no taking a promise like that back; besides," he continued, as if speaking to himself, and taking little heed of his stepmother, "besides, I burned my ships. I got father to settle his will, giving me a life interest in the farm, and no more; if I ever had children they would be unprovided for; and then I felt safe. No Prosser ever had a child he could not give at least a start in life to. I don't know why I've told you this, Fanny, only when a man's been ill half the winter he feels he can't live always, and I should turn in my grave if one of the children came to grief. I'm not afraid for Harvey, but girls are queer creatures, and if father had lived he'd have been most set on Myrtle. But you tell me she's said nothing to make you think she cares about this man?"

"No, she has said nothing."

"Well, well! perhaps I'm over-timid about her; a

girl would surely let out something her own mother could lay hold of, if she had any fancy for a man," said Caleb, in his ignorance of women; "and you can talk a bit to her, Fanny, and tell her a woman should not take the first man who asks her, and—and, well, I suppose a mother knows what to say; and watch her, and don't let her be much with him, and tell me if you see him a bit sweet on her, and he shall pack!"

"But, Caleb," remonstrated Mrs. Prosser, whose secret soul was conscious that her daughter did think a good deal about the handsome foreigner, "suppose Mr. van Hals did want to marry my girl—she's fit for any gentleman's wife, and why should we hinder it?"

Caleb kicked the leg-rest away with an exclamation of annoyance.

"Fit! of course she's fit! Do you think I'd run down my own father's daughter if she has a fool for her mother? It's the man who's not *fit*, as you call it! An idle, lazy good-for-nothing, who will never make an artist, let alone a farmer; a half-hearted fine gentleman who has no hard work in him; a foreigner with ways and friends that the child knows nothing of; a Romanist, with priests about the house, and newfangled ways of speaking the truth which puzzles honest men! I tell you, Fanny, you must stop it if it's begun; or I will, if I fling him back into his dirty Holland and his money on top of him!"

And Caleb, howling at his gouty foot, took his crutch and limped out of the room.

The mother carried her perplexity to Harvey. "Caleb's been talking about Myrtle until he frightened

me this morning, and he was angry, and called me a fool," sobbed Mrs. Prosser, dropping her voice at the tremendous word.

"You should not anger him, mother, now he's ill," said Harvey; "but what has vexed him with Myrtle?"

"Why, it's about Mr. van Hals; Caleb's afraid she'll get to care for him, and he won't hear of it, and says he'll send him away."

Harvey's bright young face shaded, and the tears sprang to his boyish eyes.

"It's too late, mother; she cares for him now. It's done, and we must make the best of it; and don't you talk to Caleb, mother, leave him to me. He'll be blaming himself, and that he should not do, now he's ill. Perhaps Van Hals won't ask her, and then she'll break her heart; but if he does she must be his wife, for she loves him, mother."

And the boy put his arm round his mother's neck and sobbed on her shoulder.

"Why, Harvey, what's to do? How do you know this, lad, and her mother does not? does she talk to you?"

"Talk to me!" said Harvey, brushing his brown hand across his eyes. "She does not know herself that she loves him; but I know. I'm not her twin-brother for nothing, mother; and I can see her eyes follow him, and her cheek flush when he speaks, and the set of her pretty mouth grow softer and tenderer when she sits at her work alone thinking—thinking of him. It's done, mother, and Caleb nor you can stop it now; but if he wins her and is not good to her, let him take care, for I'd follow him to the world's end to make him answer for every grief he's caused her."

And with his hand clenched by his side young Harvey left his mother wondering. She could not understand how it was that this distant cloud on the horizon, which to her seemed so grand and beautiful, should seem to her sons a storm-cloud laden with disaster.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARVEY was right when he said that it was too late to send Van Hals away from the farm. To Myrtle the bleak winter was passing like a rosy dream; and it was only natural it should be so, for Red Hill Farm was but a lonely and unsatisfying place for a girl such as was John Prosser's daughter.

Her childhood had been happy enough, for childhood loves to rule, and Myrtle held Harvey her willing slave, and through him Caleb, while her mother was too weak to resist the will of either of her children, and never even attempted discipline with her imperious daughter.

At fifteen she had been sent to school, and for two years lived at Exeter, gaining refinement, learning how to think, and strengthening her imagination in the Cathedral. For daily she and her fellow-pupils passed from the sunlight and noise of the streets, into the shady stillness of the Cathedral, and Myrtle was the only one who never tired.

She used to sit listening to the organ's swell, her ears drinking in the music, her eyes following up and up the clustered columns into the dimness of the roof, and her thoughts building up life's possibilities, its grandeur, and its pain, and its self-sacrifice. For it

is strange that in youth natures like Myrtle's do not think much of joy; happiness is with them always, and, seen so near, looks commonplace; it is only when they have passed through and come out on the blankness beyond that they see the rosy tints they never heeded before.

Red Hill Farm gave a delightful freedom to the girl just fresh from school, but freedom was not all Myrtle needed, and she soon grew tired of being queen over her mother and Harvey. Then came her visit to Holland, and if the Devon moor had been dull after Exeter, how much more dreary did it seem after Amsterdam. She was not easily tired of telling her mother all her adventures, and describing life in a Dutch home. The little red-curtained room beyond Anton Secker's cigar-shop was as well known to Mrs. Prosser as if she had been there, and the strange compliments the Germans and Dutchmen had paid her pretty daughter had to be repeated over and over again. But of one incident Myrtle said little, and if Mrs. Prosser had been more worldly-wise she would have noticed the omission. A person in whom the detective faculty is highly developed will listen to a voluble story with indifference, but on arriving at a point of reticence will begin to take mental notes. Hedged round by silence will be the secret.

Of the adventure *par excellence* which had befallen her in the Dutch city, Myrtle did not willingly speak, and although her mother knew she had slipped into a canal and been rescued, she did not know that Van Hals was the rescuer.

When Rupert came to the farm he was surprised to

find that she had spoken of him so little, but he was wise enough not to be displeased, and to accept the position she tacitly assigned to him of a slightly known stranger.

But as the winter months went by, Van Hals knew that he ought not to stay there unless he meant to make Myrtle his wife. And what better wife could he have, he pondered. His work was noble under her influence ; he never finished sketch or study or model without submitting it to her for suggested correction —as once he had submitted his work to Daria Leon. And yet, he thought with a half-smile at his past folly, Daria had never corrected work of his ; she had admired, praised, but not corrected. Myrtle on the contrary seldom praised, but not because she did not admire. One day to try her, he had said, laughing, as she stood looking at a model of Gray Darling :

" Well, fair critic, you do not say if you think highly of my work ; you tell me Darling has a sleepy eye, and I have given him an eye like a war-horse, and you are right ; but you do not say if the whole work pleases you."

Myrtle turned a questioning face to him.

" Oh, surely you *know* I think them beautiful ; but once you told me that correction made your work nobler than praise, and I try to remember that."

" So," he said, seizing her hand in both his, " so you care that my work should be great ; that I should be famous—do you, Myrtle ? "

" Do I care ? " the girl answered slowly ; " I think I would give, or even suffer, anything for your fame." Then her cheek flushed crimson, and she

drew away her hand, but she could not take back her words.

After this the two talked much of the time when Van Hals should be a great sculptor, and to neither did it seem very far off. Rupert had love of art, and talent, and his talent seen by the light of Myrtle's appreciation glowed like genius, and deceived even the young sculptor himself.

"I cannot imagine," he once said to her, when it was too late to work, and the two sat in the dusk in the outhouse which served Rupert as studio, "I cannot imagine it possible that I should ever be famous. Fancy someone writing my life, and saying I worked at a Devonshire farm."

"Yes," Myrtle rejoined, laughing, "and yet it is the same with all great men,—they must have a beginning; the great painters were little children once, and then when they became famous even, they had homely ways sometimes, and wives and sisters to whom they were no dearer for being great;" and somehow the little speech which began in laughter ended with a sigh.

"A great man is like Cologne Cathedral," Van Hals exclaimed; "I have told you of it, Myrtle—you must have distance before you can judge its grandeur. While you live under the shadow of it you have no idea of its proportions, or how it towers above the houses at its feet; but sail up the Rhine and look back upon it, and you see what a giant it is! As you go farther away the houses will dwindle and vanish, but it stands grandly alone. The Rhine is like the stream of history, looking back, as we sail on its winding waters, a few characters stand out—the rest are

forgotten. I wonder if I shall ever do work that shall make me remembered!" And the young man looked at the girl beside him as if he would read his fate. Myrtle clasped her hands tightly before her, and set her lips.

"If I were a man," she said, "I would not say 'I wonder,' but 'I will.'"

And from that day Rupert doubted no longer that he would ask her to be his wife; but still time went by and he said nothing.

One evening in April Van Hals came into the farmhouse parlor earlier than usual. Caleb sat by a roaring fire and smoked his pipe; gout and asthma had left him now, and with them apparently his fears about Myrtle, for much to Mrs. Prosser's relief he had not mentioned the subject again.

Mrs. Prosser was half-dozing on the other side of the fire, her hands upon the folded work on her lap. Harvey had not yet come in.

Caleb followed Van Hals' glance of inquiry round the room, and by some unwilling rather than unconscious cerebration asked the question the Dutchman was longing to ask.

"Where's Myrtle, Fanny?"

Fanny Prosser slowly opened her eyes, and let them roam lazily round in search of her daughter.

"Oh, I remember now! she's gone to see Gilbert Chorley's wife. She's been ill all winter—their cottage is so bleak up on the top of the hill."

"The top of Red Hill?" asked Rupert, rising.

"Yes, by the Red Tor; I wonder Gilbert lives there—he's the best shepherd we ever had, and he chooses that dismal spot."

"Just because he is the best shepherd," said Caleb.

"He likes to be where he can scan the biggest sheep-run from top to bottom. You can see that bit of Red Hill, that my father used to say minded him of what the Sussex folk call a down, from the scrub against the sky down to the pebble in the hollow of the valley, and never need move from Chorley's door."

"I'll go and meet her," Rupert said, and a moment after they heard him calling to his dog outside.

This dog was a grievance to Caleb, and was always reckoned up in the catalogue of Rupert's sins. It was a hound of some curious breed, and was only remarkable for its size and its pale color, suggestive of St. Bernard ancestry. The farm dogs, taking the cue from their master, as dogs will, snarled at the stranger from the day Van Hals bought him at Bagstock Mill, and nothing irritated Caleb Prosser more than to call the creature a St. Bernard.

"If that mongrel's got any good blood in his veins," the farmer would growl angrily, "he has only presumed upon it to live in idleness. He reminds me of a London flunkey, all show and no work."

Perhaps the dog felt the scorn in which he was held at the farm, and attached himself all the more to the one being who appreciated him, for he never seemed happy away from his master, and Rupert seldom forgot to call Monk from his kennel when he went out. This evening Van Hals called him as usual, lighted a cigar, and began to climb the rugged path at the back of the farm which led to Chorley's cottage. He had made up his mind to tell Myrtle he loved her, and meeting her on this lovely hillpath he would be sure to find her alone. As he climbed the wind blew fresher—he was gaining the open moor, and the tufts

of primroses at his feet were set further and further apart. The sky was of that pearl-pure tone seen only in spring. It was sea-green and torquoise-blue subdued almost to grayness by nature's own "Lamp of Moderation"; behind it one might fancy piled up, mountain high, all the bygone winter snows, as sorrow lies behind a peaceful face. The young artist stopped to drink in the beauty of it, and saw Myrtle in the distance coming toward him. At her side was something small and white, which he knew to be a lamb she had brought up in the house, and which she loved better than all the creatures at the farm. In Myrtle the longing to defend the defenseless was almost a passion, and from the time when, barely eight years old, she had crept out of bed at night to find a kitten mewing piteously in some out-house, all desolate animals were brought at once to her.

Down the sheep-track which served for a path came Myrtle singing, with the strong young lamb by her side, and down to meet her from an opposite swell of the moor went Rupert with his dog at his heels, and just in a dip of the hilly ground, where the wind blew softly and the twilight deepened, they met and Van Hals held out both his hands.

"Myrtle," he cried, "I want to speak to you; I want you to be my wife."

"Oh," Myrtle said, and put her hand before her eyes with a sudden movement, almost of fear, "why did you not wait a little longer?"

"Wait, my darling? why should I wait? I love you, Myrtle."

"I do not know why, but I want time to think. I am afraid,—oh, Rupert, I am afraid!"

"Afraid!" Rupert said, trying to pull down the hand which she still kept pressed tightly over her eyes. "There is nothing to fear, Myrtle, if we love each other. Do you love me, dear?"

"There is the difference between us," Myrtle said, answering only his assertion that there was nothing to fear; "our nation, our religion. They say those are not happy marriages where there is difference in great things. I would not care," she continued, taking her hand from her face, and looking at him with grave, child-like eyes, "if it were not so happy for me, but suppose it were not happy for you? That would kill me."

Here surely, unknown to herself, was answer enough to his question, and Rupert bent his head to kiss the grave troubled face; when suddenly there was a frightened rush, a cry of fear, a hoarse and terrible growl, and there on the short grass Rupert's hound was worrying Myrtle's lamb.

The dog was beaten off, but too late, the poor mangled and bleeding favorite lay dying at Myrtle's feet. The girl bent over the white woolly thing, her heart torn at the sound of each panting, painful breath. Suddenly she started up.

"See," she cried to Van Hals, "do you not see you must kill it? Look how it suffers; it may be hours dying. Quick! it is mercy to put it out of its pain."

But the young man turned his head away; he was sick, faint, and trembling.

"I cannot," he muttered.

A crimson flush of indignation dyed Myrtle's forehead.

"Ah," she said, with a bitter scorn of his weakness, "I said there was a difference between us."

Quickly she took off a soft white shawl she wore round her shoulders, and laid the piteous moaning heap, which a few minutes before had been a bounding living creature, on it, then carried a heavy stone red with iron from one of the trickling streams on the moor, and tied that in the shawl. She asked for no help, and seemed to ignore Rupert's presence, but following her glance, he saw just below them a hole roughly railed round, full to the brim of water in which was reflected the pure, pale sky. He remembered the shepherd telling him it was terribly deep, and that there were wild tales about it; and then he saw the young girl gather the lamb in her strong arms, and carry it, shawl and stone and all, to the rude low rail. She waited a moment and then lifted her burden over, and dropped it into the deep moor-hole.

In another moment she was by Rupert's side.

"It is not death that is hard," she said; "it's painful dying." And without looking at him, she sped on quickly homeward.

There was a tempest in her heart, and she knew not how fast her feet carried her. What had happened in the past few minutes, from the time when she left the last glow of sunset on the other side of the hill to this gray moment when a few stars were faintly shining? Rupert loved her, and her lamb was dead, and Rupert was a weak coward. For Myrtle judged harshly and hastily, as young girls do. It may seem a paradox, but it is true, that the stronger a woman's nature is the more it craves for a strength above its own. "Was this a man to lean on, to trust in," the wounded heart

cried, "who could not nerve himself to put a tortured animal out of its pain?" Harvey would have done it, and Caleb; even she, a girl, could do it; but he—neither for pity, nor for love of her, had he been able to command his shaking hand, or call the fire of resolution to his white cheek. She made no allowance for constitutional difference, for the sensitiveness which is linked to artistic perception; she was bitterly disappointed in Rupert van Hals, and she loved him. There lay the sting—she loved him.

Close by the farm she met her brother Harvey. "Myrtle, come in," he said; "you have frightened mother—it's late for you to be out. But what ails you, sister? Your hand is cold, you are shaking like a reed in the mill-eddy. What is it, Myrtle?"

"My lamb is dead," his sister said, in a choking voice.

"Why, then, I'm sorry for that, dear; but don't fret. I'll find you another."

"Another? Ah, yes! there are other lambs."

Myrtle's manner was so strange that Harvey said no more, but walked by her side silently until they reached home, and then he drew her into the parlor.

There for the first time her appearance frightened him. The firelight shone on her white face, and her dress was splashed and stained.

"Why, child," cried her mother, starting up, "where is your shawl, and look at your hands! What is the matter? Oh, horror! there is blood on your dress."

Myrtle shuddered.

"It is the poor lamb's," she said, sitting down as if she had no strength left; "the hound worried it in a moment. Poor little thing! oh, poor, poor little

thing!" And the overstrained girl burst into passionate tears.

"Curse the hound!" said Harvey, below his breath, and went out unnoticed.

"I knew there was some flaw in the brute, and that's it," said Caleb. "Well, it must be sold now, or there won't be a sheep safe on the farm; once it's tasted blood there'll be no holding it. Where was it, child? There, don't fret, the creature's dead by now, I warrant. That's right, Fanny, bathe her hands and get her a clean apron—she's been cuddling the poor mangled thing, I reckon."

"Where is it?" asked Mrs. Prosser.

"I threw it in the hole below Red Tor; they say drowning does not hurt, and it was moaning so."

"Eh, child!" cried Fanny Prosser, throwing up her hands, "how could you do it? And the hole so unlucky too, and going down, down, no one knows where. Where was Mr. van Hals?"

"He beat the dog off," Myrtle said coldly, and just then Rupert came in.

He behaved very well under the somewhat trying circumstances; apologized to Mrs. Prosser, and accepted Caleb's dictum that the dog must be sold, without any remonstrance.

"When a brute like that once tastes blood he's useless—if there ever was any use in him. One of the men can take him to Exeter to-morrow and sell him. Many a farmer would poison him at once, but I won't say that; only you must say what has happened, so that no man who's got any sheep may buy him."

Caleb laid down the law, and Van Hals listened, but all the time he was longing for a word from Myrtle,

and Myrtle would neither speak nor look at him. At last it dawned upon Caleb that things in general were uncomfortable, and that he could not allow. He disliked the man, but he was under his roof, and could claim a host's forbearance.

"Come, come," he said, turning to Myrtle, "forget and forgive, child! it's only a lamb the less, and a girl's tears the more. Draw up for supper, for I'm hungry. Where's Harvey? Shooting barn-owls, I fancy by the sound," as the crack of a gun was heard in the distance.

They drew their chairs to the table, but Myrtle would not eat, and Van Hals answered questions at random, and Mrs. Prosser looked from one to the other with a puckered face of perplexity. When the door opened and Harvey came in, his mother gave a little cry:

"What's come to the lad?" she said.

"Harvey," said Caleb, not looking up from his supper, "we'll have done with a disagreeable subject at once. Tell one of the men to take Mr. van Hals' hound to Exeter by the early train, and get it sold. He must say it is a sheep-worrier, of course."

"There is no need for that," Harvey answered, walking straight up to Van Hals, and laying four or five sovereigns before him on the table; "I shot it myself half an hour ago; and there's the money you gave for it at Bagstock Mill."

CHAPTER IX.

It is a well-known trait in woman's nature that though she may blame the man she loves herself, she will suffer no one else to blame him.

Myrtle Prosser had been bitterly angry with her lover until Harvey, in his boyish, jealous anger, had shot Rupert's dog; from that moment her heart began to defend him. The incident caused an unusual commotion in the quiet life at Red Hill Farm. Perhaps no one but Van Hals fully understood Harvey's motives. When the boy stood flushed and passionate by his side, insulting him with his offer of money, ready to pick a quarrel at the lightest provocation, Rupert knew that this was only the condensation of feelings which had long been gathering strength. Harvey had mistrusted Rupert from the day he came; Harvey had read his love for Myrtle and resented it; and this attack of the hound on Myrtle's favorite was to the boy but a type of the attack made by its owner on their peaceful home.

But Van Hals was determined to win Myrtle, and he knew that to quarrel with her brother was not the way to win her. So he pushed the money aside quietly enough, and bowing in his easy foreign way to Mrs. Prosser, left the family alone.

Even Caleb, who seldom saw a fault in his young brother, thought Harvey had gone too far. Mrs. Prosser was positively angry at her boy's rudeness to a stranger, and Myrtle looked at him with reproachful eyes.

"I wish you had not done it, lad," Caleb said, with

some annoyance in his tone. "The man is a gentleman, with all his faults, and he is not English, and won't, mayhap, make allowance for your English bluntness. And then I would not have him think we care so little for his property, and so much for ours. I'd rather the brute had worried a sheep or two, I tell you, Harvey, than that you should insult a stranger."

"It was not for the sheep, Caleb," the boy cried hotly. "I never thought of our property, as you call it; but—but I won't have a thing of Myrtle's touched to vex her, without making him who touched it know that she has a brother who cares more for her than he does!"

Harvey had said more than he meant to say, and Caleb shook his head with a heavy sigh, and looked at Fanny's frightened face and at the crimson flush on Myrtle's cheek, and then took his pipe in silence.

Myrtle lay awake by her mother's side half the night. Harvey seemed to her unjust—what if she had been unjust too?

Her anger and disappointment had been exaggerated, and reaction was inevitable.

Rupert loved her, she said to herself, trying to keep still, and think calmly by the side of her sleeping mother. He loved her, but then in some things she was stronger than he; that powerlessness to save the lamb from pain was only a type of a certain lack of fiber she had feared in him before.

And she had so longed to look up to him, to rely on her husband's strength to hold firm when hers failed, and now was she to guide him as she did her mother and Harvey?—would no one ever be king over her?

Then a thought came to her in the darkness—what if Rupert needed just the kind of strength that she had to give? what if she could help him to attain the fame he longed for? And just as the dawn came streaming in through the snow-white curtains, Myrtle fell quietly asleep with a new resolution in her heart.

When Rupert met her again next day he struck the right chord when he said, "You are stronger than I, Myrtle, and you thought I was stronger than you. It will not be the first time that the making of a man is in the hands of the woman he loves, and does it seem terrible to you that it should be so? Will you not stoop, darling, and lift me to your level?"

"Ah," cried the penitent girl, "it is you who stoop, not I. I was unjust, Rupert. Any plow-boy on the farm could have killed my lamb for me; I forgot that finer natures are sensitive."

In her indignant self-reproach she was not content to make his weakness no fault, but she must needs exalt it into a virtue. After this there was no more to say; the two wandered for an hour or more sheltered by the high banks and hedges in the lanes where the primroses lay like fallen stars. As they turned home again Myrtle ventured to ask Rupert if his father would like his marriage.

"Probably not," her lover answered—it was not the first time the question had forced itself on his attention, "but then, my dear, he has not liked any deed or plan of mine for many years. I am more concerned about your brother."

"Harvey?"

"No, Caleb; Harvey's consent will hardly be necessary."

Myrtle sighed ; she wished her twin brother liked Rupert better.

"Oh, Caleb will agree to whatever makes me happy," she said ; "but I should like to tell my mother first—she will be glad at least."

It was arranged between them that Myrtle should find her mother and tell her, so that Rupert might speak to Caleb in the evening.

Fanny Prosser was superintending the drawing of the loaves from the great baking oven, the success of the week's bread always causing her much anxiety.

"Mother, mother, I want you," cried Myrtle, throwing open the door of the inner kitchen where stood Mrs. Prosser full in the red glare of the fire. "How can you stand this heat? It is not good for you—come with me."

She shook a shawl from her own neck, and wrapped it round her mother.

"I want to speak to you," she whispered, and drew Mrs. Prosser into the larger kitchen where stood the great Dutch clock, and the snow-white scoured dresser, and the climbing geraniums in pots in the window sill.

"What is it, child?" Mrs. Prosser asked fretfully, sitting wearily on a low chair. She knew what Myrtle was going to say and she dreaded it.

Myrtle knelt by her side.

"Mother, little mother, I am so happy. I am going to be Rupert's wife ; he asked me, and before I knew whether I was glad myself, I was sure you would be glad. But you are so grave, and not like yourself! Say you are pleased, mother."

But Mrs. Prosser only looked frightened.

"What will Caleb say?" she said, below her breath.

Before Myrtle could answer, Caleb's heavy step was heard, and the stick he had never laid by since his illness in the winter struck the stone floor with regular blows. Mrs. Prosser started up as if to escape, and then sat down again helplessly. Caleb pushed the door, which grated on the sanded floor of the kitchen, and came in. One glance at the two women told him that his worst fears were realized.

"So it's come, has it, Fanny?" he said, pulling a chair toward her.

"Yes, Caleb, and it is only fitting——"

"Well, what is fitting?"

"That you should hear it from——"

"Nay, nay, Fanny; if I must have bad news, I'd rather hear it from my own people."

"But, Caleb," broke in Myrtle, "it is not bad news; it is only that I—that—tell him, mother," she said, hiding her face against Caleb's rough coat sleeve.

"Mr. van Hals wishes to marry my girl, Caleb," Fanny said timidly, as though to remind her stepson that Myrtle was not *his* daughter.

"I feared it. And she says?"

Myrtle raised her head, with a little defiance.

"She says, yes, Caleb."

"I feared that too. Ah, well, God made women out of queer stuff, I reckon. Twenty years—twenty years have you lived on the farm, child,"—and his stiff hard fingers stroked restlessly the glossy head that leaned against him,—"and what the child loved the woman is eager to leave."

"Not eager, Caleb," Myrtle whispered, awed by his solemn manner.

"Well, willing—we will not quarrel about a word. It would be the death of me to think of going away from the old place, but you can leave your mother and me, and your twin brother ——" Here the farmer broke off suddenly, "Poor lad, poor lad," he muttered, "I did not understand last night, but I do now. Poor Harvey! he loves you, Myrtle, and you can leave him for a stranger."

"Caleb, you forget," Mrs. Prosser ventured, "a woman must leave home. I left my home for your father."

"Ay, for my father! who would not?" cried her inconsistent stepson. "He was an Englishman, and said his prayers in his own mother tongue; but this man's a foreign papist, and if you don't know what that is, I do! It's hard work plowing over rough ground when your team is well-matched in height and strength, but set a pair to work that are not meant to be mated, they'll do no good work, and what they do will take all the strength out of them."

"But, Caleb, you will give your consent?" pleaded Myrtle.

"Consent of mine is not needed, child; you can marry who you will, with your mother's leave. But I'll be at no wedding of yours, Myrtle, that I think would vex your father, and this is one he would not hear of."

"You are not kind to me, brother; you speak as if I did not love mother, and Harvey, and you, because I can bear to go away from you. And now you say my father would not consent, and that is a cow-

ardly thing to say, because he is not here to deny it, or to listen to me if I told him all."

And then Myrtle put her arm round her mother's shoulder and led her from the room. Caleb laid his head on his hand, and sighed, and Mrs. Prosser, looking back, thought for the first time that her stepson was getting an old man.

"Myrtle, think better of it," her mother urged, touched by Caleb's real sorrow. "After all, your brother may be right about this man—are you sure of him?"

"I am sure of my love, mother, and is not that enough?" Myrtle said proudly, and yet with a sigh.

"Well, I do not know, you are stronger than I; but when your father married me, I knew nothing about my love, but I was sure of him, and that seems safer somehow."

Caleb heard their whispering, and it vexed him. He took his stick and went out to look for Harvey; he at least would understand him. But instead of his young brother he met Van Hals strolling lazily up the garden, a cigar in his mouth.

His indolent lounging walk annoyed Caleb, at a moment when it is hard to say what would not have annoyed him. He planted his stick firmly on the ground and awaited his enemy.

Rupert advanced eagerly to the angry farmer, and began to speak rapidly, gesticulating with both hands, but retaining his cigar between his teeth.

"Throw that cigar away!" cried Caleb.

An Englishman removes his cigar if he speaks earnestly, but a Dutchman wants both hands free to talk, and is so constantly smoking that he does not think it

116350B

necessary to take his cigar from his mouth unless he addresses a lady. However, Rupert threw the offending tobacco on the ground and set his heel upon it.

"You are angry with me, Mr. Prosser," the young man began, "and it is idle to pretend I do not know the reason. I have asked for your sister's hand."

"My sister's hand is for an Englishman only," said Caleb roughly. "What you wish is impossible, sir; she must marry her own countryman."

"My father married an Englishwoman; I am only half what you call a foreigner," Rupert said, curbing his impatience.

"What I *call* a foreigner!" cried Caleb. "I should like to know who is a foreigner if a Dutchman isn't!" after which decidedly British opinion the farmer turned out of the garden, kicking some inoffensive chickens out of his path, and led the way to the big barn.

Van Hals understood that he was expected to follow, and he wisely kept silence as he did so. Caleb's heavy tread and the striking of his stick sounded hollow on the barn floor; on one side had been stored a winter's supply of hay, and where it had been cut away, so as to get the benefit of the warmth, a young calf was tethered. The farmer leaned his broad back against the wall of hay, and turned toward Van Hals. His face was hard and set, but not irritable; he was master of himself again, and spoke calmly.

"Listen to me," he said, raising his hand as Rupert would have spoken. "You think you love my sister. Well, if that is so, be a man and leave her to her own people. I've thought this over for months past,—and

if I had not trusted a woman I'd have stopped it long ago,—and I am sure it is not for Myrtle's happiness. A mixed marriage is not a happy one, or not at least for a girl like Myrtle. Your ways are not hers; your friends are different; you'd mayhap tire of her, and she'd be lonely—lonely and miserable, and her mother far away."

This was not the objection Van Hals had anticipated, and it seemed easy enough to answer; he had only dreaded opposition on the score of insufficient means. He reminded Caleb that Myrtle knew something of Amsterdam, and had been very happy there; but was interrupted again.

"Then there's religion. Myrtle is accustomed to her own church——"

"Her religion should not be interfered with, that I promise," interrupted Van Hals.

"I know that," Caleb said dryly. "I should take care to settle that, sir. However, it is no use arguing. I have no power to stop the marriage if her mother consents, but I won't be present, and that I've told her."

Van Hals did not see that Caleb's presence would make much difference.

"I hope you may be mistaken about your sister's happiness," he said, a little stiffly; "if Mrs. Prosser will allow me I will write to my father."

"Ah!" cried Caleb, a new light breaking in upon him, "what have you to marry on? Does your father make you an allowance?"

"He is going to start me on a farm," Van Hals said, mentioning so much of the truth as he imagined would be most acceptable to his hearer. "It is his

own property, and I shall manage it. Of course we should have to be economical until my father's death."

"And on his death?"

Rupert did not like to confess that he had not the slightest idea whether his father was rich or poor.

"I am his only child," he said diplomatically.

"Humph! How will he like you marrying a farmer's daughter? He may cut you off with a shilling."

"I will write at least," answered Rupert eagerly, and then Caleb saw his mistake.

If he had meant war to the knife, he should never have held parley with the enemy.

"I've been weak, weak, weak," he muttered to himself, and turned and left the barn.

All responsibility was thus thrown upon Mrs. Prosser—and she deferred decision until Van Hals could receive a letter from his father. When at last this momentous missive came, it was in German, and allowed of paraphrase.

Rupert translated it, with amendments, for Mrs. Prosser's benefit. The lieutenant had long accepted his son's theory that fathers should attempt no control over their son's actions, particularly in the matter of marriage, which was sure to bring its own retribution. He therefore gave any permission Rupert did him the honor to consider necessary, and assured his son that he should make no change in his testamentary dispositions.

"Well, I'm sure," said Fanny Prosser, perplexity written on her simple face, "it is very kind of your father, and very—satisfactory."

"I am glad you see it in that light, dear Mrs. Pros-

ser," Van Hals said ambiguously, and with a sigh of relief. "Now you will not let your son prejudice you against me any longer, will you? Believe me, you shall not regret that you trusted me with your daughter."

CHAPTER X.

MYRTLE'S marriage was not long delayed. Even Caleb urged haste, saying: "If it must be, for Heaven's sake get it over," with a look in his face which almost made Mrs. Prosser change her mind again.

To please Myrtle Harvey wore a cheerful face, and listened to all she had to say about her new hopes, because he loved to feel her arm about his neck as in the old days when they were boy and girl together, before Rupert came.

Van Hals, once assured of Myrtle's love, could not rest at Red Hill Farm, but was eager to begin work in Amsterdam. The quiet English life became intolerable to him now that it had served its end. To his surprise his father played into his hand. The lieutenant wrote to tell his son that the manager of the farm at Drock had died suddenly, and to suggest that Rupert, with his wife, should lose no time in taking his place.

So in the summer Myrtle Prosser became Myrtle van Hals. Caleb was not present at the marriage, which took place at the same church in which Fanny Harvey, more than twenty years before, had plighted her troth to John Prosser against her father's wish. After the English Church service, the whole party took train to Exeter, where the Roman Catholic half

of the ceremony was performed in a little dingy chapel, the darkness and mystery of which half frightened Mrs. Prosser. The wedding breakfast was at the house of Myrtle's old schoolmistress in Exeter, where she had spent some weeks of the early summer; and then the bride said good-by, with a grave face, and passed forever beyond her mother's help or comfort.

"I do hope she will be happy," said Mrs. Prosser, shedding a few tears, as she and Harvey returned together to Red Hill Farm.

"I hope so too," answered her son, with a gravity beyond his years; "for if she is not we shall never know."

A fortnight later the husband and wife were in Amsterdam. Lieutenant van Hals had put off his annual visit to Ems on their account, and it was understood that it could be delayed no longer.

"There is not a soul in the streets," said Rupert, looking eagerly from the windows of the *coupé* which took them from the railway station. "Look, Myrtle, there is Secker's, and Anton himself at the door! He little thinks who is with me. Who is he talking to? Oh, Haussmann! Come, there is at least one fellow to exchange cigars with."

Myrtle looked at her husband.

"How glad you are to be here again, Rupert."

"Glad! I am wild, ecstatic, child! You don't know Amsterdam, Myrtle; it is like Paris to those who know its ways—it spoils you for the whole world outside."

His head was out of the window again.

"The Müllers are away, and the Bahlmans. Never

mind, we can get quietly settled at Drock, and be ready for winter festivities. Here we are, dear. I wonder what you will think of my father."

Paul himself opened the door to them.

"Welcome to madame," he said, bowing. He had orders to show Mr. Rupert his rooms, and to say that Lieutenant van Hals hoped for the pleasure of their company at dinner in an hour.

It was not what Myrtle had expected, but it was evidently a relief to Rupert not to see his father at once. Paul led them down a corridor, and threw open a double door which reached nearly to the ceiling. It opened into a large and barely furnished sitting room, with three great windows; at the further end another double door led into the bedroom. A boy who had followed at their heels set down a trunk, pulled up a Venetian blind with a clatter, and left the room, followed by Paul. No woman servant was to be seen. Myrtle felt a little desolate, but determined to be cheerful.

"Is that your father's valet, Rupert? What an old man!"

"Yes; he is very silent—he is the only man in my father's confidence, and it seems to weigh upon him heavily. You must dress for dinner, Myrtle. Put on your prettiest frock, little girl; and I will turn into my studio and have a smoke."

"Where is your studio?"

"Just across the garden," said Rupert, pointing from the window. "I can't think why they have given us these rooms; they are dreary to my mind. However, it is only for a few days."

When Rupert came back he found his wife dressed.

"Shall we go to the drawing room when you are ready, dear?" she asked.

"Paul will summon us; my father is an extraordinary man, and likes to be approached with ceremony."

In due time Paul appeared, knocked, and then threw open the doors and announced that he would conduct madame to his master. The Devonshire girl trembled a little, although she was not easily daunted, but her husband's obvious dread of his father was not reassuring.

Following Paul's slow steps, in her simple white dress, she was so graceful that Rupert thought she must please even the lieutenant. The three went up the softly-carpeted stairs in silence; an open door at the top showed a large, well-furnished room, lighted, although day still glimmered outside, by shaded lamps, and an old man standing at the further end. Lieutenant van Hals advanced toward them slowly, and turned to his son.

"Present me, if you please, Rupert."

"My wife," Rupert said, taking Myrtle's hand, and placing it in his father's.

The soldier raised it halfway to his lips, and bent his head in a courtly manner.

"A cordial welcome," he said, in a tone whence cordiality had long been banished.

His daughter-in-law looked at him curiously.

He was dressed with much care and very neatly, and the impression of stiffness which his manner produced was increased by the position of his right arm, which, in its sleeve buttoned from wrist to shoulder, was held across his white waistcoat with its little gilded buttons, as if it were in a sling.

"I am afraid you have hurt your arm," said Myrtle timidly, for Rupert did not speak, and the silence was oppressive.

"An old wound, my dear, of forty year back," the lieutenant said, and his son looked more cheerful, for a reference to his battle scars always pleased the old soldier.

An inner door was thrown open, and a brilliantly lighted cabinet, in which a table was laid for three, looked to Myrtle like an effect on the stage.

Paul stood there bowing in silent invitation, and the lieutenant offered Myrtle his arm, and led her in to dinner. The appointments were exquisite. A bouquet of choice white rosebuds was placed before Myrtle in a delicate vase. A glass dish in the center of the table held one of those marvelous triumphs of confectionery which are the delight of Holland and Germany, and which Myrtle remembered Frau Secker ordering on festive occasions. There was not much to eat, but what there was was handed in silver dishes; and such conversation as there was, was carefully worded, and doled out at rare intervals like the wine.

At the close of dinner the lieutenant ordered another bottle of hock. Paul hesitated.

"You have no more?" asked his master.

"No, sir."

"Did I not tell you to send for a few more dozens?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"But?" And the irritable tap of the stiff fingers on the table warned Myrtle that her polite father-in-law could be offended.

"The wine-merchant sent his bill in again—and——"

"And you were afraid to tell me? Ha, ha!" and the lieutenant glanced at his son, with a peculiar expression. "Mr. Rupert here will tell you what that means—it means that he wants another order, that is all. Put the bill in the fire, Paul, and order six dozen; and meanwhile decant some claret."

When the wine came Rupert declined it.

"Ah, you want to smoke," said his father. "Very well; leave your wife with me, we will talk a little."

Rupert accepted the permission at once, in spite of an appealing look from Myrtle, and she was left alone with the lieutenant.

"So you have not been afraid to take my foolish son in hand?" the old man began, pouring himself a glass of claret, and drinking to the bride with a bend of the head. "Well, that is well. How old are you, my dear?"

"I am twenty."

"So young! I should have thought you older—that blush is becoming, but not needed, my dear; your husband can tell you that you have not reached an age at which it is a poor compliment to be supposed older than you are. You are *une femme gracieuse;* you have no girlish ways—ah, I have seen English girls, and I know. They are stiff, they are *gauche,* they are impossible! But you, you look twenty-five. Do not be afraid! you will have your revenge on time, and at thirty will seem little older."

Myrtle did not know what to say to these compliments, but she treasured them up because they would please Rupert.

"So you are twenty!" the old man went on, after a pause; "you will soon be twenty-one, and then there will be a little money, a *dot*—is it not so? just enough for the pocket money of the young wife! No?"

"I don't know," Myrtle answered, not liking the turn the conversation was taking; "at least my brother said my father had left me a little money, but I had forgotten about it. It comes to me and to my twin brother when we are of age."

"Just so, just so! as I thought. How much was it, did you say?"

Myrtle's color rose, but he was Rupert's father, what could she do? He had perhaps a right to ask, but why not speak to her husband? Still Rupert would be vexed if she offended him, so she answered a little stiffly:

"I think my brother said it would be two thousand pounds by this time—for each of us."

The soldier rose hastily, striking his hand as he did so very sharply on a hand bell that stood by his side.

"So! it is as I said—a little pocket money, and that is all! Paul," for the valet's white head was bent respectfully to his master, "bring coffee, and tell Mr. Rupert it is served."

He lighted a cigarette with a slight excuse, and smoked in silence. Myrtle longed to go, but did not think she could find her way to her room alone; besides, Rupert would come back in a moment.

Her husband entered, glanced at Myrtle's face and at his father's, and frowned.

"Rupert, you have been a fool," the lieutenant said, knocking the ash from his cigarette into a little filigree

tray; "you have been smoking that strong English tobacco, and it has completely warped your judgment. I do not suppose you can appreciate the delicacy of my cigars."

Rupert took the box his father pushed to him across the table, and wondered what this meant. However, he was not fond of calling his father to account for his speeches, and had learned by experience that a few apparently careless words often contained a sting which was better avoided than sought for, so he pleaded his wife's fatigue after the journey, and offered to light her to her room. The lieutenant also seemed anxious to avoid a private interview with his son, and informed him that he proposed leaving next day for Ems.

"Do not hesitate to make this house yours until the Dock Farm is ready for you," he said politely; "and when you are comfortably settled at home, I may give myself the pleasure of seeing a little domestic happiness."

"What has my father been saying to you?" Rupert asked, when he was alone with his wife.

"He was talking about money," answered Myrtle, with some misgiving in her tone.

Her husband looked keenly at her.

"About money! Did he suggest—did he promise anything?"

"No, Rupert; he asked questions. He wanted to know what Harvey and I would have when we come of age."

"He did not dare?" cried the young man, indignant. "I ought not to have left you with him. Did he annoy you, Myrtle? What did you say?"

"I told him, dear."

"What? You told him what?"

"What Caleb said the day before we were married, that Harvey and I would have about two thousand pounds each."

Rupert seemed disturbed.

"What did my father say?"

"I did not quite understand; something about it being just pocket money for me, I think."

"Yes," her husband said thoughtfully; "it would seem a very small sum to him, of course."

"Is he very rich, Rupert?"

"He is very extravagant, my dear, and I hope he is rich. He must be rich to pay all his bills—that is if he pays them; but you heard what he said to-night."

"About the wine? I thought that was only a joke."

"A grim joke, for those who come after him, Myrtle. But see here," and Rupert held up a letter; "This holds a check for three hundred francs for Gray Darling in terra-cotta! Ah, I did well to send to Paris; it may be the beginning of greatness for me."

Myrtle's face was radiant with joy.

"Oh, let me see!" she cried, clinging to her husband's arm. "What a pity you broke up so much of your work."

"I wanted the clay, and then firing was expensive and risky at Exeter, and I had no ready money. No, dear, the strength of the work done at the Farm has passed into my hands, and before us lies—who shall say what, my wife?"

Myrtle's eyes were full of tears.

"Dear Rupert, do not hope too eagerly, you will have to be patient a long time perhaps."

"Perhaps," Rupert said, kissing the face upturned to his; "but truly, my dearest, I do not believe this farm at Drock need hold us long. It will only be necessary to stay there until my name is a little known. I must have a studio in Amsterdam, and you will not be sad if I am away from you, Myrtle? After all, my father's land is best fitted for cattle and dairy work,—there are few crops to see to,—and you understand the dairy, you know."

Yes, she understood, and she would do what she could while he was away; she agreed that art must have his first thoughts.

"Only, I thought you would work at the farm, Rupert?" she said a little wistfully.

"And carry my work backward and forward, with the risk that that entails. Impossible! besides, as soon as I can afford it I must work in stone, and then in marble."

It was well she would not mind his leaving her alone, for day after day she was alone, through the fast fading summer and the advancing autumn. His work kept him in Amsterdam while daylight lasted, and then old artist friends came in and welcomed him back, and praised his fine spirited piece, "An English cart horse," as Gray Darling was called; and all drank to his success, and sang songs of good-fellowship, whose choruses echoed in the little street where he rented one room as a studio.

But it was lonely at the Drock Farm, and unlike home. The green lush grass seemed rank and damp to Myrtle, accustomed to bask on the warm hill slopes of the Devon moor. Instead of the familiar gurgling stream, red with hidden iron and dyeing the grass and

stones in its track, straight ditches divided the land into regular portions, where the only object to break the monotony were a few gates and groups of black and white cows.

The very clouds were unlike England. At Red Hill Farm the clouds sailed lazily past, warm-looking, soft and fleecy, or in storm-times loomed ponderous and thunder-threatening. But here the clouds seemed always racing, hurrying onward, gray and rain-laden, as if fanned by the whirling windmills below. These same windmills were a nightmare to Myrtle. They stood like sentinels on all sides, barring the horizon, or waving wild arms to warn her of some danger lying out beyond them. In the daytime, left alone with the Dutch farm-laborers and the one Dutch house-maiden, Myrtle hated the windmills; but as evening drew near, and the wind died at sunset, and a warm glow mellowed the coldness of the landscape, and the long shadows of the cattle were thrown on the green grass, she forgot her loneliness, and set out to meet her husband.

The road to the station, along a dyke, was straight and dreary, but she could see the train coming in the far distance, and with Rupert beside her could turn her face even to the Dutch farm and call it home.

When the two drew their chairs to the fire, it was delightful to hear of Rupert's hopes, which had to be told daily, and his triumphs, which as yet were only occasional; and easy to laugh over Myrtle's mistakes in managing the Dutch farm servants, mistakes which had seemed irretrievable when Rupert was away.

But Myrtle was not the woman to make her husband's will her law, where it seemed unreasonable. For work she never grudged his absence, but there came a time when his old friends returned to Amsterdam, and finding him out in his studio, planned little dinners at a restaurant, little suppers after the theater, all of which, being bachelor arrangements, excluded Myrtle.

She said nothing; she was too proud to ask him to stay with her if he preferred to be away, but she was not blind to the selfishness which prompted his absence.

One evening he came home with a new light in his face.

"A commission, little wife, a commission, and in marble!" he cried.

It was what they had been longing for, it being too costly to work in marble on mere speculation, and Myrtle asked eagerly how he obtained the order.

Rupert's cheek flushed a little.

"I met a Spaniard to-day—a Spanish lady—who takes some interest in my work, and she will insist that marble is the only worthy ambition for me, so she has given me an order."

"What shall you do?" asked his wife.

"She came to the studio and chose for herself; do you remember when I modeled you in clay with the doves on your breast? That is what I am to copy for her."

"I thought you had broken it up, dear."

"No, I saved that one; and I am glad, for it may make our fortune." And Rupert relapsed into a reverie.

"But you will not give up terra-cotta work yet?" urged Myrtle. "You said once, that it ought to be many years before you counted upon success in marble."

"What a timid-hearted wife," laughed her husband; "you have not half the faith in my power that this Spanish patroness has!"

Myrtle did not ask any further question, and Rupert was unusually silent all the evening, thinking of his interview with Daria Leon.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR Daria Leon was the "Spanish patroness," of whom Rupert spoke with a conscious smile on his lips, and he had seen her that day in Amsterdam.

Walking up the Kalver Straat, early in the afternoon, Rupert paused at the door of a small art gallery where one or two of his works were for sale. He turned his head at the sound of quick-trotting horses brought suddenly to a stand-still, and smiling at him from a splendid chariot was Daria Leon.

"Where have you been?" she said, giving him her hand.

"In England."

"So Dr. Isencraw told me, months ago; in England, studying, he said, and I did not believe him. In Rome, if you will, in Paris, in Florence—but in England!"

"Nevertheless, fair lady, it was in England," Van Hals answered, smiling.

"Come into my carriage—take me to your studio, I must see your work."

"You too have been away," Rupert said, giving the address to the servant. "I have been in Amsterdam since August, and I saw you were from home."

"Yes, we have been in Spain; my father had business. What a curious thing that you and I, who were such friends, have been parted a year without a word from each other. Do you see me changed?"

Rupert whispered some complimentary reply. Daria laid her hand on his arm.

"You do not say, 'Am I changed?'" she said, looking at him, "because you know it. You are graver, my friend, sadder I would almost say. Does anything trouble you?"

It is possible the Jewess thought that absence from her had saddened him, and gave him this opportunity of saying so. But at the moment Rupert did not even see her meaning.

"I left Holland in despair," he said; "my work was condemned, would not sell, and that, though you protest, matters much to me; and I am anxious, as you know, to make a name one day."

"Is that all?" she cried gayly. "See, the carriage stops! Is this your studio. What a poor street, but that is nothing to genius. Come, and let me see."

He gave her his hand, and felt hers tremble in his grasp. How this proud woman loved him! Was it because of wounding her, or lest she should no longer care to help his art, that he never breathed a word about his wife?

Daria Leon sat in the small room, and looked round on his work.

"You are stronger," she said; "you see it yourself? no more Tazzas with Bacchus boys, no more garlands of roses? Do not lose your delicacy, my friend, for that is rare, and it is what won my admiration first. Do you remember the bygone days?"

"Look," Rupert said, yielding to the fascination which had cast a spell over him a year ago, and he took from a cabinet a model of a hand.

"My hand?" the Spaniard asked, with a smile.

"Your hand. Do you remember the day I modeled it? It is waiting. I have never used it yet, but some day it shall be a queen's hand crowning a kneeling poet."

In truth, Rupert had forgotten the model, but when he moved from the studio by his father's house to this obscure room, Daria's hand had been sent with other studies, and now he almost believed he had treasured it purposely.

"Ah, those doves!" cried Daria suddenly; "what softness of plumage! How can you make clay look like feathers? I will give you a commission, sculptor mine, that shall make you famous; carve me those in marble."

The doves she looked at were on a woman's breast, held against it by a somewhat masculine hand, in keeping with the head against the chin of which they nestled. Rupert had modeled the group from Myrtle herself as she fed her doves one morning, and the calm, grave face above the timid birds had a grand strength about it; Rupert was at his best when he studied Myrtle.

Daria did not seem to take much note of the face, but the doves had caught her fancy, and she would

hear no excuse—that group and no other she would have in marble.

"And now come home with me, and tell me all you have done since we met."

"All I have done?" said Rupert, with a smile.

"In art, I mean; you know I have said I would make you a sculptor, and what I say is done always—always, my friend; so come."

"I ought to work," began Rupert lamely.

"Can you not give me one afternoon, great sculptor? Is work the only part of art you heed? Is not something due also to inspiration? You used to care a little for my praise."

Was this the Daria Leon he remembered? The proud, capricious beauty, whose gentler moods were broken by passionate utterances, whom men called fickle and cruel? Now she was gentle, pleading, almost sad. A touch of pity for her held Rupert captive, and against his will he went with her to the Jew's house in the Keizer's Gracht.

Little seemed changed in the familiar rooms, and it might have been yesterday that he had sat there, and talked, as always, of future fame, and listened to praise from those lovely lips.

As he went home his conscience reproached him a little; he had let her take up the thread of their friendship just where it had dropped almost a year ago. Now and then, as he looked at her downcast eyes, he fancied it had become to her a magic chain which there was no undoing; but he remembered Isencraw's warning and smiled at his own conceit. She was playing with him as she had played with other men, he told himself; the only difference—a

happy one for him—that when she cast him off, he would feel no shock of pain, or even of surprise.

Still, though he knew all this, she had power enough over him to make his voice low and soft when he spoke to her—and to make him forget to tell her that he had a wife who waited his return.

When Rupert left, Daria stood for some minutes lost in thought; then she looked at her watch, and lifting the silken curtain which hung over the door of the room, passed into a large hall, and so into other rooms opening one from another, where in the dim light might be seen pictures and rare vases, and marble statues of great value and beauty. The house was a large one, and extended far back from the street; when Daria had passed through many rooms she knocked at a door and opened it. At a table, reading a letter, sat her father. The Jew had not a prepossessing face. Each year as it passed seemed to have set a sordid mark upon him. His nose was of the type known as Jewish, bony and large; his large, strong, yellow teeth unpleasantly suggested a missing link in the direction of the carnivorous animals; his eyes were black, and the withered skin round them was of a dark color like a walnut stain.

He looked up as the door opened, and over the harsh features stole a softening smile.

He held up the letter he was reading.

"See, daughter, your hand is sought again, and by a Jew, my Daria!"

His daughter smiled proudly.

"If I could believe they sought me for my face instead of my fortune, or, better and rarer still, for

myself, who am perhaps least known to those who praise me most, I should be a vain woman, father."

"Nay but, Daria, this is from one of our own people. A Jew; and not a Jew such as men here know me,—money-getting and money-lending,—but a Spaniard of blue blood, a fit mate for my daughter. Read, Daria."

"Father, you would not force me to marry," and Daria sat close by her father's side, and pushed aside the letter he offered her.

"Force you! Why do you say that?" asked the Jew, looking keenly, almost fiercely, at his beautiful daughter. "You are terribly like your mother, child."

"Would you not have me like her, father? you loved her so well," said his daughter gently, and stroking his clenched and yellow hand.

"Ay, I loved her. Men call me hard, and I am hard, Daria. They speak of the Jew usurer, the Shylock of Amsterdam, who loves but two things: his ducats and his daughter. But they little think that deeper than even love for you, child, is love of the dead wife whom that love killed."

"Do not speak so, even to me, father, you know you would have shielded her from all harm if it had been possible."

"All harm but my own presence, and that killed her. She died of hatred for the father of her child."

"Father!" his daughter cried. She had never heard him speak like this.

"Poor timid bird!" the Jew said, almost in a whisper, "it was cruel—and I can see it now—to take her from her convent school and give her to me for a wife.

I never had a handsome face, but I was young and rich, and I loved her; without the love her father would have given her to me. He was a Christian, and Christians do not cherish their children as we of the kingly race do, Daria; they will sell them for gold."

A terrible sneer disfigured the usurer's face; then he went on: "He sold her to me, and she hated me. For five years she pined by my side, and then when her child was born, she died."

The Jew seized his quivering lip with his terrible animal teeth, and held it, as though to keep back the bitter grief which consumed him.

"She died—she loved no other man, I guarded her youth and beauty too jealously for that. You are her child, Daria, her child and mine, and do you think, with this thing burned into my memory, that I will force you to marry? No," he said with a laugh that was worse to hear than his words, "I will not be haunted by two women's ghosts."

Daria kissed, with passionate, trembling lips, the face against which her own was pressed.

"My tender, stern, rich—poor father," she cried, all her heart stirred at the story he had for the first time told her.

They sat together, this strange father and daughter, for many minutes in silence; then Leon folded the letter of which he had spoken, and placed it in a drawer in the table at which he sat.

"This is not to be, then, daughter?"

Daria shook her head. Then with a timidity in strong contrast to her usual proud tone, she said:

"Are you so entirely set on my marriage with a Jew, father?"

Leon looked at her, and noted a change in her.

"You agreed with me yourself, Daria, a year ago."

"I know—but I have changed; I would not have believed it possible, but yet the change is here," and she struck her beautiful hand, the hand that Rupert had modeled, against her breast.

"My daughter," Leon said, and took her hand in his and held it fast, "you have seen some man, some Christian whom you love?"

She did not speak, she only looked straight in her father's eyes.

"Ah!" the Jew drew his breath as if in pain; "your mother was a Christian; I did not think, Daria, that father and daughter were to have the same fate. And yet not the same, for you are beautiful. Has he, this Christian, spoken to you, Daria?"

"Spoken?"

"Told you of his love; asked for your hand?" her father explained.

"Asked for my hand? told of his love?" Daria said, in a bewildered way. "Father," she cried, springing to her feet, "he does not love me—yet! But he will, he will! Do you think any man could resist me, whom I set myself to win, and whom I love?" The beautiful Southern face was full of a strange enthusiasm.

"Who is the man who has moved you thus, Daria?" her father asked almost angrily. "You have not been used to woo, daughter; if tales are true you have scorned the love of many men; and are you, Leon's child, to be the seeker? It is not fitting, Daria. Leave the man to me, and trust me, he will not resist your father."

"Oh, father! I have trusted you, you only in all the world; I have talked to you as if I were talking to my girl-mother who is dead, and who never seems older than I am, in my thoughts of her. You must not betray me. If you had bidden me, for the honor of our race, and because I am a Leon, I would have torn this love from my heart; but you do not, and though I know I stoop in taking a Christian, yet, father, listen, here is my ambition: I will make him famous that he may be worthy even of Daria Leon."

The Jew half smiled.

"They are right who say the Leons of Spain are proud," he said. "Now go ask your Christian to our house, but not alone—that might be too marked as yet. Bid one other guest to meet him, Daria."

"I will ask your friendly doctor, Isencraw. You like him, father, and so do I; he never wearies me with flattery as most men do; and besides he knows him, whom I want you to know."

When she had left him, and the door was shut, the Jew drew aside a small gold-embroidered curtain heavy with gold fringe; it disclosed a portrait of a young girl, who might have been Daria's younger sister; the features were Daria's, with the exception of the mouth and eyes, about which a tearful terror played as about the face of a timid, scolded child.

Leon looked at it long and thoughtfully. "She is like," he muttered, "but prouder. Daria would not die, she would kill her husband. She has the Leon blood in her veins, the blood that forgives no insult, and forgets no injury. A Christian! Why should she love a Christian? Fate, fate which we talk of, but do

not believe in, until it has us by the throat. Well, she must have her will ; I dare not thwart a child of mine and hers." He pulled the curtain back with a gentle hand, then opened a door behind his chair and called : " Simon ! "

This door led into a narrow passage, on the other side of which was a room or office where two or three clerks sat writing, The Jew did not keep many subordinates, and all of them were old men whom he could trust. Simon came in, a man of about sixty, a Dutchman by birth, but a Jew like his master.

" The rich Englishman offers four thousand pounds for the Ariadne," Leon said, referring to a letter on his table.

Simon made a mental calculation without speaking.

" That is good ; a fair interest on the money," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone. " You gave three thousand two hundred pounds."

" Yes," Leon said, showing his teeth in a grimace that passed for a smile—when he smiled alone with Daria his lips were closed ; " and I have had it a year."

The other chuckled and rubbed his hands.

" That small loan ? " he asked.

It was so rare to grant a small loan, Leon's clients as a rule coming only for large sums, that the adjective identified it at once.

" Van Hals ? " Leon asked carelessly. " Is the security good ? "

Simon screwed his lips up and shook his head.

" I have seen better—and I have taken worse."

" Who is the man ? "

" A German, once in the army. He has a handsome

son, a painter, or something of the sort; he used to come to the Señora Daria's evenings."

A scathing light seem to open the Jew's eyes; for a moment he did not speak.

"Give him the money," at last he said, "and send away the Ariadne to-morrow. I will see you at ten o'clock; I must join my daughter now."

Simon left him.

"So!" Leon muttered, "it is he. I am sure of it. She asks Isencraw; Isencraw knows him—spoke of him once, now I come to recall it all. That is not bad; one Christian is the same as another, but we have some hold on this man. Isencraw will tell me his past—and it is as well to continue the loan to his father. Handsome, is he? even Simon says he is handsome. That has caught Daria, a curved lip and a fair face! Will women never learn that sometimes God makes masks?"

When Leon and his daughter met in the evening not a word was said by either of the subject which filled their minds.

CHAPTER XII.

A WEEK later Daria Leon sat alone in her father's drawing room. She might have been in a palace for luxury; the room was painted in panels by Weenix from wainscot to ceiling, silk curtains were drawn over windows of pink and violet Venetian glass, and, in quaint Venetian candlesticks of every form and tint, numberless candles shed a soft light on rare vases of flowers. On a couch by the fire Daria sat thinking, and waiting. She had determined that when Van

Hals came,—and he was to come this evening,—she would give him some favoring intimation that he might speak. It was evident to her that her wealth appalled him; also it was given out that she would wed no Christian. How could she expect that he would venture to put this to the test without some hint from herself?

She would speak to him to-night; she was not wont to be timid; her lightest wish was law to her admirers,—a few words would suffice,—and then?

From the further and dimly lighted room Van Hals was advancing toward her. He was early. Neither her father nor Isencraw had yet arrived; it was possible that in sending his invitation the Señora had named an earlier hour than that given to the doctor. As he came toward her, Rupert's artist eye took in all the details of her splendid dress. She wore an Oriental robe of amber silk embroidered with pearls, her crimson fan was Eastern also, and glittered with wonderful embroidery.

Van Hals greeted her with ceremony, as befitted such a room, from which European ways seemed banished. Then he sat by her side and looked round with a sigh.

"It is well to be rich," he said.

A pleased smile played in Daria's soft eyes; she liked him to appreciate what it was in her power to confer.

He was thinking of the contrast of this room and the farm at Drock. There, he and Myrtle piled up peat and logs, and made what they called an "English fire," but wintry winds whispered in the corners of the room, and threatened bitter blasts to come sweeping

across the dykes by-and-by. Rupert's nature was susceptible to creature comforts, and he was beginning to tire of the farm at Drock.

His hostess watched his roving, admiring eyes. If he loved luxury so much, it would lend a stronger influence than she had hoped to the words she was to speak presently: All this can I give thee.

"And yet," Rupert said, after a silence, with his inveterate tendency to look at everything through himself, "and yet it is better for me to be poor; an artist should have no luxuries."

"There I do not agree with you," Daria answered. "In the case of a poet, you are right; a poet must speak out of his own wrung heart, or he will never know the troubles of ours—and we expect that he should know them; but the painter and the sculptor must not be starved and chilled. We do not want weeping Niobes, or despairing Sapphos—we want Hebes, and loves, and nymphs, and dancing girls; and visions of these can be had on silken couches, friend."

"You think so? Well, I am not an ascetic, I am willing to be convinced." Rupert stooped and played with the pet dog at her feet. "Sometimes," he said, "I think you could make of me what you will, at other times——"

"My father can make the fortune of any artist," Daria said eagerly. "If he buys a few of his works, other people buy too; they know his reputation as a judge of good work."

"But suppose my work is not good, or he does not think it good."

"He would buy what I wished," Daria said, very

low. "But I interrupted you," she continued, in an altered tone. "What do you think of me at other times?"

"That your praise enervates me," Rupert answered, remembering what had been the result of her old influence over him. "In England——"

Daria tossed her fan with a scornful gesture.

"The English are a puritan nation," she cried; "they would hold even art within a narrow groove. See for yourself—look at your own work! It has taken a certain stamp of strength, I grant, but what is this piece you send to Paris? A cart-horse! a strong animal with shaggy hair on its feet, and a neck which you cannot span where the short mane grows. It is good work, but it is only a cart-horse; you would have made a creature to draw Apollo's sun-chariot, here!"

"As I hear you talk," the young sculptor said, smiling, "I verily think I should."

"Have I then some power over you?" the Jewess said, half to herself. "Can I stir you to some enthusiasm, such as men feel in Spain, where the sun is not cold and gray, as it is here?"

As she sat there leaning forward, the firelight on her rich dress, her face in soft shadow, he must have been a strong man—and Rupert was not strong—who could resist the fascination that dwelt in each changing tone of her voice and the beauty of her Spanish face and eyes.

"Have you some power?" Van Hals exclaimed, rising as he spoke, and leaning on the mantelshelf; "what power have you not?"

Daria laid her head back in her chair and let her

dreamy eyes rest on the man before her. She could afford to wait a little, to see him perplexed and troubled, she who had a gift in her closed hand ready for giving—giving to him who could not ask for it.

"Suppose," she said, with a happy smile about her lips, "suppose a woman such as I, rich beyond her own needing—suppose she wished to confer wealth and power and her heart's friendship on some friend, as you once said a queen might, what must she do? wait until her help is claimed, her friendship chosen, or speak first?"

"It is the privilege of queens that they must choose," Van Hals said gravely.

"That *must* destroys the privilege and makes it penalty."

"Well, it is the penalty, if you will; it is not a hard one, since all their slaves are longing to be chosen."

The Jewess rose, and stood by his side.

"But how," she said, with dropped voice, "how must this queen, who is yet a woman, indicate her choice?"

"Why do you wish to know?" asked Rupert uneasily.

Daria's imperious manner returned for a moment.

"I wish it—is not that enough?" she said.

Rupert answered with would-be carelessness.

"She gives some trifling thing, does she not? A fan to hold, a flower, what you will; her subjects understand."

"Ah, I remember; one reads of it in courtly books. If the queen thinks that one she cares for loves her and would tell her so, if he and she were equals in his

eyes,—as they are in hers,—she takes a flower, a simple flower, from her dress perhaps, and gives it to him—thus."

The young man gazed at her as one entranced; saw the olive-tinted, perfect hand disengage, with fingers that trembled a little, in spite of the command still retained over the voice, a flower from her dress, and hold it out to him. Like a man in a dream he lifted his hand and touched hers, the flower fell to the ground at their feet, and suddenly he was aware of the presence of Leon and Dr. Isencraw.

Daria's self-possession never left her; she was the graceful, dignified hostess as she returned Isencraw's greeting; it was Van Hals who could find no words, and who stood like an awkward schoolboy.

The Jew, when his daughter had introduced their guest, began a sort of catechism of Van Hals, a habit he had acquired by the necessity for minute inquiry in his peculiar line of business.

"Your father is a soldier, I believe, sir?" he said, bending his large head, and waving his yellow hands. "Do you follow the same profession?"

Van Hals murmured something about a more peaceful occupation, and Dr. Isencraw, the gleam of whose spectacles followed Rupert inexorably, explained this as meaning farming.

They were moving into the next room to dinner, and Daria turned her laughing face to her father as she led the way:

"The doctor is unromantic," she said; "Cimabue was a shepherd, was he not? but the world has forgotten that he was anything but a painter. Mr. van Hals farms for life, but models for immortality."

"Still the farm has attractions," said Isencraw archly. "I have been wishing to do myself the honor of calling at Drock, with your permission, Van Hals."

Van Hals bowed, but turned the subject to the paintings on the walls before them.

Magnificent as was the room, it had one feature that gave it the air of a vast warehouse in the eyes of its owner—the pictures, statues, and tapestries were only there for a time, stored, as it were, for purchasers. The Jew bought nothing that he did not mean to sell again. Ceasing to care for gold as a power, as a means to an end,—for he had reached the end of it,—he still loved to handle it and watch its growth; it was a slave whose usefulness had found its limit, but Leon would still feel and prove himself its master.

"I cannot endure this room," cried Leon's daughter; "I like my household gods around me, and these are only mine until someone bids a high enough price for them. It is no secret," she added, looking at her father, "it is my father's way."

"I confess, gentlemen," said the Jew, "that to me calculated life is tame. I like the element of chance in everything. There is, practically, no limit to what I might possess; there is to what I may sell. Here comes in another man's will and wealth as well as my own; to consider the law of chances, to stake my opinion on the value of a particular work or gem, to acquire it and wait to see if I have rightly judged, this gives to my mind an interest altogether inestimable to mere buying and selling. We Jews are merchants born; we do not strive to be rich only; it is not wealth, but the pleasure of acquiring, which fascinates us."

The Jew had made a long speech,—for him an un-

usual one,—and he soon became silent and abstracted, taking little heed of his guests, unless when a keen glance shot from his black eyes at Isencraw. It seemed as though he read the doctor's face as a mirror, in which might be seen reflected what was passing on the countenance of that guest at whom his host did not look. Leon noted the bewildered shifting of the doctor's eyes from Van Hals to Daria, and back again to Van Hals; heard, though he appeared not to hear, the doctor's unanswered questions, or interrupted and tentative statements; and, keener than a jealous lover or watchful duenna, he weighed each word that fell from the lips of the man his daughter loved.

Van Hals seemed ill at ease, yet talked eagerly and rapidly; Isencraw was unusually silent, and even Daria's happy laugh smote her father's heart with a chill foreboding. The conversation drifted back to art. Daria was eager to explain to the doctor her theory of the influence of Rupert's year in England upon his work.

"Some day you shall confirm my opinion, doctor," she said, speaking with her pretty Spanish gesture; "the sculptor carves for me a pair of doves! Ah, they are lovely, even in marble. You shall long to lay your hand in their soft plumage; but even here England—cold, isolated, unsympathetic England—steps in, and chills you. The birds are on a woman's breast, her chin dents in the billowy feathers on the back of one of the doves. Would you not think she too would be soft and winning, tender and timid? But she is as stern as Diana, with a set mouth, and grave eyes—she frightened me!"

Dr. Isencraw looked at Van Hals.

"I imagined the lady with the doves was a conception of your wife," he said; "I think I saw the clay in your studio."

The Jewess suspected nothing. She laughed gayly in Isencraw's grave face.

"So that is your future, great sculptor, your beau ideal! I had not guessed your fancy went that way! A pale cheek and nunlike face! Alas, for poor languid-eyed, Southern beauties, who must needs caress the thing that nestles to them, and could not purse their lips to save their souls!"

Isencraw was honestly perplexed; he thought he must be mistaken; perhaps the woman in the group in Rupert's studio was not Myrtle after all.

"I may be wrong," he said, in his bewilderment, "but I certainly thought the head you referred to was that of Mrs. van Hals. Was it not so?"

Even then the Jewess did not understand. A short involuntary exclamation from her father made her look up. There was a moment of silence; the Jew's eyes were fixed on Rupert's face, and on that face was written, plain for all to read, the truth—the bitter, humiliating truth. She read it, the passionate, proud woman who loved him, and her face was like a stone mask. The instinct of woman to conceal pain, above all pain which is a confession of weakness, forced her will into one surpreme effort of silence. But on her lap her hands—unseen by any—were clenched, and the interlaced fingers locked so that she had no power to unclasp them.

She had not dreamed of a rival: a year ago she had tested Rupert by letting him meet beautiful and

fascinating women, and he had displayed unmistakable indifference; and now he was married! Married! She knew it before he spoke in answer to her father's almost fierce question, and as she listened the voices of the men beside her sounded distant, as though drowned by the roar of a cataract close at her ear.

The Jew was putting a strong constraint upon himself.

"We all seem to be laboring under some delusion," he said sneeringly. "I too thought my guest was a bachelor. Is it possible, Mr. van Hals, that you have the happiness of being a married man?"

Rupert dared not look at Daria.

"I have that happiness," he murmured.

The Jew glanced at his daughter, and bowed ironically to the sculptor.

"I congratulate you," he said.

At the sound of Rupert's voice the blood rushed tumultuously back to Daria's brain, setting it on fire like a draught of strong wine. She wrenched her clasped hands asunder, and laughed a light, hollow laugh.

"I owe you all an apology," she said, her dark eyes fixed on her father's face; "it is all my fault. I had not told my father of Mr. van Hals' marriage—simply for this reason, that he had not done me the honor to tell me himself. When I heard of it, as he had said nothing, I said nothing. But it is unpardonable, is it not? To ask a husband to dinner without his wife is a breach of etiquette on the part of a hostess."

Leon was put off his guard by his daughter's self-control.

"Then you knew it, Daria?" he asked.

Van Hals involuntarily turned his eyes to the Jewess. It was a moment in which she required all her power.

"Oh, yes, I knew it!" she said, and as she spoke she had no idea how her voice sounded; in her own ears it was like a metal hammer striking in her head. "I forget who told me. Let me see, when was the happy day?" and she forced herself to look at Van Hals.

"In the summer," he answered mechanically.

"Ah, yes, in the summer, in England, or in Arcadia, which was it? No wonder England held you for a year, in spite of art and fame."

"But you met your wife in Amsterdam last year, did you not?" mercilessly pursued Isencraw. "Is not she the lady you rescued from the canal?"

"A romance, doctor!" cried the Jewess; "I had not heard that. Tell us the story."

And Isencraw told the story, just as he knew it, scorning the man who sat listening, and who, having won a wife like Myrtle, could bring himself to conceal the fact of his marriage. Perhaps some feeling of jealousy prompted the doctor; he had been near enough loving Myrtle himself to resent keenly any slight put upon her. He guessed that he was torturing Van Hals, but the knowledge did not restrain him; he little dreamed that he was giving still deeper torture to the smiling woman who sat beside him.

At last it was over. When, under ordinary circumstances, she would have risen from the table, Daria rose; not one moment sooner.

"I take coffee in the other room," she said; "will you follow me when your cigarettes are finished?"

As Rupert held aside the silken portière that she

might pass out, she looked into his face with a curious triumphant smile.

He was not so strong as she. The doctor and her father joined her alone later, making Van Hals' excuses—he had felt suddenly faint and had been obliged to go home.

Isencraw, too, left early; and the father and daughter were alone.

"Daria," the Jew said abruptly, "what does this mean? is this the Christian you had chosen? Yet you tell me you knew he was married."

The Spanish woman turned her scornful face to her father.

"Would you have had me show my heart-wound before strangers?" she asked.

"Then he has scorned you?" the Jew cried hoarsely, his features working. "The Christian beggar has deceived Leon's daughter? You did well, my child, my noble Daria, to let no sign escape you; you cheated even your father—you did well. He guesses nothing. Now for revenge. We must plan it deep, Daria, you and I. His father is in my debt already—we will ruin them, father and son together!"

"Ruin them?" Daria said coldly. "What is ruin? The loss of money, position, comfort! Do you call that revenge? No, father, leave me to deal with him. Daria Leon can avenge herself."

She was like stone, cold and dead; even the pain she had suffered was more of a memory than a reality. Her father tried to caress her, but her hands lay icy and unresponsive in his.

"You are mistaken, Daria. I know what you women think: you fancy your best revenge is through

his heart; I tell you it is not. A man like that has no heart to strike at. Leave him to me. I know how to make even villains feel."

The Jew pleaded long with her, and at last left her; she had promised that if she failed she would ask his help. Leon turned to look at her as he left the room. She seemed unaware of his presence.

He groaned as he realized the gulf which separated him from the one being he loved. He measured the pain she suffered by the strength of her repression, as after some poisons the very rigidity of the victim indicates the fatal power of the death draught.

It might be some hours afterward that Leon's daughter shivered and stood on her feet. The fire had died out; the candles had burned low; the house was cold and still. On the ground lay a drooping flower, the one she had offered to Van Hals.

She stooped and placed the rose upon her open hand.

"Oh, the shame of it, the shame of it!" she murmured. "To have offered him my love, and have it scorned! Perhaps before these faded petals shall have shriveled, Daria Leon will offer the Christian her hate, and he shall not pass it so lightly by."

CHAPTER XIII.

JAN KRANZ stood at the door of a house in the Jews' quarter of Amsterdam. The light was never very bright here, for the tall houses, built on sunken piles, leaned forward like old men whispering some grim secret; but Kranz shaded his bleared eyes with his hands as he looked up and down the street.

Few carriages passed through the Jews' quarter, the dirty uneven pavements were not inviting, and one was compelled to drive slowly to avoid the black-eyed children who were scattered over the roadway like rabbits in a warren. From cellar to roof the houses were full of families; rags that had once been bright-colored fluttered from many windows; rickety flights of broken steps, protected by a thin and twisted hand-rail, led to the chief door of each house, where as a rule the inmates carried on some trade.

Kranz climbed the steps belonging to the house in the cellar of which he rented, but seldom paid for, a room, and peering blindly through the crowd, at last found what he sought, a green kerchief bound about a woman's head. The green object he watched came nearer and nearer; he could see the black curly hair under it; could hear the quick step of the girl he waited for. She was his dead wife's sister, Esther.

She was better dressed and looked better fed than Kranz, but then, besides working with her needle, she sometimes sat as a painter's model, and that paid pretty well. Then she was a woman, and as yet cared to keep herself neat and clean, and Kranz did not; and she never drank, and Kranz did.

"What have you got for me, Esther?" he asked, holding out a shaking hand.

"I've got a letter, a letter to Leon the great money-lender; but it is for work, Jan, not for money; and it is better so, brother, if you could only think it—money goes fast, and with you goes only one way."

"Who gave it you?" Jan asked again, turning the letter with its gilded crest over and over in his trembling fingers.

Esther named a Jewish lady who employed her as an embroideress.

"Well, I'll take it, since there is nothing else, but what work will you get out of these arms, Esther?"

They were worn and wasted to the bone, and his sister shook her head. When Jan's wife died she had left her baby in Esther's care, with injunctions to wait until its father's return from Java, and then to be a sister to him. With rare fidelity she had fulfilled her task, and had clung to Jan Kranz through good and evil report, until she had learned to love the man who would long ago have been dead but for her.

Kranz stumbled down the steps and along the street, with the letter in his hand, and Esther turned into the cellar in which they lived.

In the corner on a heap of straw, which was fairly clean and fresh, lay a wizened child asleep, with its arm round the neck of a starved white dog with bristling hair. Krebs beat his short tail once on the floor by way of welcome, and Esther drew a chair to the window and took up some elaborate embroidery.

Meanwhile Kranz was making his way to Leon's house. He knew better than to go to the entrance in the Keizer's Gracht, but went round to the street at the back of the house where the great usurer's poorer or more exclusively business clients were received. When he touched a bell the door opened, and he found himself in a large hall, covered with matting, where on leather-covered benches against the wall sat more than a dozen persons. All waited patiently, and, absorbed in their own concerns, or anxious to escape curious observation, hardly one moved as Kranz entered.

Presently a man came from a room which had windows opening into the hall, and went rapidly from one waiting client to another to ascertain their business, just as the subordinates in a hospital pass cases in review before the doctors come round.

A lady, closely veiled, held a jewel case in her hand; she was sent into the inner room or office; a priest, with a base and cringing face, offered a crucifix carved in ivory: "We do not buy your God, though you would sell him," said the Jew into whose hand he gave it, with a contemptuous glance, and the priest slunk away.

When the clerk saw Kranz's letter he took it from him and went down a corridor which led to Leon's private room. Those who knew this looked with some curiosity at Jan, who alone of all the waiting throng was to have his case considered by Leon himself.

"When you hear a bell ring twice, go down that corridor," said the clerk in a low voice to Jan on his return.

In half an hour the sharp "ping" of an electric bell startled him from a doze into which he had fallen. He staggered to his feet, weak from fasting, giddy from habitual drinking, and made his way as he had been told. A servant rose from a sort of recess in the wall, and ushered him into Leon's presence. The Jew eyed him from head to foot.

"Your name?"

"Jan Kranz, most high-born."

Leon's black eyes read him without an effort; he pointed to the rags which covered him.

"What brought you to this pass?" he asked. "Drink?"

No prevarication was possible to the miserable Jan under that truth-compelling gaze.

"Not drink first, excellency—misery. I drink to forget."

"Leave cringing to Christians," said Leon, "and answer me as man to man, as Jew to Jew. Do you know the lady who wrote this?" and he struck the letter Esther had given to her brother.

"My wife's sister obtained it for me, for charity; the lady has never seen me."

"I never give charity; I never give anything," said the usurer; "I exchange. It is possible you may suit my purpose; but I must know more of you. What is your past? You come of an unhealthy stock."

"No," Kranz answered, studiously avoiding his usual servile phrases, "my father's blood was sweet and clean, and so was mine; but Java poisoned me."

"You were in Java?"

"Yes; I was poor, and a Christian offered me money—the coward!—to take his place as a soldier. I might have left in a year, but I stayed on and was ordered abroad; and the pestilent fevers of Batavia made me what I am."

"He may help you, this man who did not care to fight. Who is he?"

"Van Hals is his name—he——"

"Van——?"

The Jew crushed the letter in his hand into a hard ball and threw it on the fire.

"Herr Rupert van Hals; he is an artist, I think. I lost sight of him, but I have found him again. I owe him much!"

"Yes, he has made you an unsightly wreck," said the Jew cruelly. "You owe him a grudge."

"More than a grudge," Kranz continued, emboldened by Leon's unexpected though coarse sympathy. "When I took his money I had a wife—it was for her sake I went to Java; when I came back she was dead, and had borne me a child. But for that I would die, but I cannot let the little one starve."

"What was your trade before you served as this man's substitute?"

Leon could not pronounce Rupert's name without wincing yet.

"I was a diamond-cutter."

"Ah! can you do good work? In any case, that will do for me; you shall go back to your old trade."

He wrote a few lines and gave them to Kranz.

"Take this paper to the overseer; he will give you work. Remember, I want no thanks; I should not give you this help if I did not see that some day I may want you. When that day comes there must be no flinching—I sometimes exact strange services. Now go! Do not drink. Report yourself to one of my clerks every week as the Sabbath closes, and be ready when I send for you."

Leon bent his head over his papers, and heeded not the murmured gratitude and professions of obedience with which Jan accompanied his departure.

When he had gone the Jew pulled a cord which, communicating with his clerk's room, gave a signal that he was not to be disturbed; then selecting a key from his pocket, he opened a safe and took from it a casket. Here in a faded velvet case lay a string of diamonds. They were but poor treasures for Leon to

gloat over, but he held them in his parchment-like palm and counted them in miserly fashion. A gentle tap at the door leading into the private part of the house disturbed him ; he threw his handkerchief over the diamonds and bade who knocked enter, and Daria came in. She was changed in nothing, except for the stony glare in her eyes, since the day she last sat in that room with her father.

Leon lifted his handkerchief and showed her the gems.

" See, daughter, there ought to be forty-nine flawless stones ; seven sevens, the mystic Jewish number. You wonder that I set store on diamonds of which I can buy hundreds to-night of finer water than these ; but these are charmed stones ; our happiness—your happiness, Daria, is linked with them."

" You are superstitious," said Daria wearily, and as she spoke another change was noticeable, the tone of her voice was altered.

" In this, in this only," her father said rapidly. " Listen, child, and judge for yourself.

" These stones were given to my grandfather ; they date back to Inquisition days, I believe, and carry their owner's fate with him. Intact, seven times seven, they bring joy to her who wears them ; intact I clasped them round the neck of my bride. The day we were married she let them fall—how, I know not. The frail setting broke, and one stone was lost. You know whether my bride was happy, Daria. The night you were born that stone was brought back to me, by one who knew its value, and kept it to claim a fabulous price for the gem."

Leon bent over the casket, and selected a stone.

"This is the one, I think; I cannot be sure without better glasses," he said, looking at his daughter's impassive face. "I paid the sum asked, and ran eagerly —oh, child! who can say how eagerly?—to place the lost diamond with the others. Picture it, Daria, if you can—after five years of misery, a child born to me, and the mystic circle of stones complete. Who can fail to see the omen? I ran like a boy to the case. Daughter, it was gone! Gone!"

Leon shouted in a revival of the old remembered agony, and Daria looked into his face with sudden fear.

"Stolen, father?"

"Stolen. That night your mother died. Was it superstition that gave me no rest until at least some of the gems were in my hands again?"

"Then you traced them?" Daria asked.

"I have agents, tools, friends,—what you like,—all over the world; it is not easy to keep from me what I claim. Besides, the thieves knew nothing about diamonds—diamonds like these can be identified; they broke up the necklet, and took single stones to the dealers, but they were known at once. There is not a diamond merchant in the civilized world who does not know the Leon diamonds; they must come back to me—there is too much risk in keeping them."

"But are they all here?" his daughter asked. "I thought you said some were missing."

"Eight are missing; a fatal yet a hopeful number. There is no power of seven in forty-one,—hence you are unfortunate, my daughter, for it is on the women of our house the fate falls. But,"—the Jew whispered hoarsely, his shriveled hand tightening over Daria's,—

"think, the next stone recovered brings the number up to forty-two; that holds a seven, and you may be happy."

"Happy?" the Spanish girl repeated, in such a tone of bitter mockery that even Leon started.

"Not happy in love, Daria; I do not say that, until I hold every mystic stone in my hand; but can you not fancy a happiness in revenge?"

His daughter was silent.

"Tell me," she said presently, "you say these stones can be identified. How?"

"By their peculiar yellow color—which those who study diamonds know to be rare and remarkable; by their size, and by an appearance in the center which can only be seen under certain conditions and by the aid of certain glasses."

"Then why not advertise for them?"

"Ah," the Jew said, with a half smile, "then the superstition you scorned has a hold even upon you, Daria! No, I will not advertise. The few stones lacking are in private hands—in the hands of persons, that is, who could recognize no identifying description. Sooner or later they will come into the market, and then they are mine. I have men in the diamond works here in Amsterdam—spies. I have sent another in to-day. I have agents in Paris, in London, in Vienna, in St. Petersburg. I can wait."

"And I?" The words seemed wrung from Daria, as she looked in wild appeal at her father. She had crept to his room in a restless longing for news, and the only comfort he could give her was to promise her revenge. She thought of the years since her birth, during which her father had never given up his

search for the missing diamonds. How patient old men could be! She had heard of prisoners, grown old in captivity, to whom their prison seemed a kind of haven; it was the young captives who beat their breasts against the bars.

It was but a few days since she had known that Rupert loved another woman, but she felt as if years had passed since his hand touched hers.

Her father could wait because he was sure that in the end what he waited for would be his; but she had no such assurance, no years would bring her Rupert's love. No, there was nothing left but revenge, and revenge would not satisfy her. Must she grow old, and hard, and life-weary, she wondered, before her enemy's grief would count as joy to her?

Her father watched her narrowly.

"The Christian scorns us, Daria—we are of the despised race; he would rather mate with an English peasant than claim kindred with the blood of the Leons of Spain. Does not that stir you to vengeance, daughter?"

It did, but not as he thought. For the time Daria's pride of race was gone, lost in her wounded woman's pride, but the mention of Rupert's wife stirred her bitterest jealousy.

The Jew remembered that a man had scorned his daughter; Daria thought only of the woman who had bewitched her lover; and while Leon vowed vengeance against Van Hals, his daughter planned how she could break the heart of the English girl who was his wife.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the spring Myrtle was twenty-one, and the money left to her by her father became due.

March was at its coldest, and the Devonshire girl wondered whether it was in a dream that she had fancied her birthday was in the spring, and that Harvey had got up early to gather primroses for her. Surely never was bleaker place on earth than the dyke near the Drock Farm. The wind swept it in one steady rush, bending the long grass level with the earth, and producing a weird gray shimmer on its greenness.

Part of the farm lay in a Polder, or land reclaimed from a swamp or marsh. It was of course much below the level of the surrounding country, and protected by dykes and pumps, worked by windmills, from inundation.

Oh, the horrible necessity for these restless windmills to Myrtle! She could not exult, as her husband bade her, at the thought that by them man triumphed over nature. To her it was dreadful that man and nature should be at strife. She thought of the sunny sea, and the happy rivers, that washed the shores or roamed the valleys of Devon; here the sea was a gray monster ready to devour, and the rivers were his servants. All ordinary life seemed inverted. At home you stood on a hill slope, and looked at the streams at your feet; here you were startled by the great sail of a barge looming dark and portentous apparently up in the sky, higher than the dykes and little scattered cottages, and you realized with a shudder that the canals were above your head.

Even Rupert was changed, his wife thought; and she was right. Rupert van Hals, like most weak men, took his mental coloring from his surroundings. In England he had fallen so easily into the simple ways at Red Hill Farm that Myrtle was won by his apparent content, and gave him perhaps more credit than he deserved. It was easier to his nature to acquiesce than to oppose, and what she had admired as a generous self-denial, arose chiefly from indolence.

Besides, the days in Devonshire were the days of his wooing, and at such times hardships turn their smoothest edges to the lover. It was different now, and Van Hals returned all the more eagerly to his old ways and old friends, because he had perforce laid them by for a season.

It cannot be said that his wife had expected this, but at least she did not complain, until—how and why she knew not—his mood suddenly changed from coldness to reproach. Myrtle could trace nothing to account for Rupert's sullen temper and bitter words, but *he* knew when the change came well enough. He himself had cut the links which bound him to Daria Leon, but he had done so under a twofold misapprehension. He believed that her influence on his power as a sculptor was bad, and that she would never marry a Christian. Now he knew that the last belief was unfounded, and he began, under the charm of her old fascination, to doubt whether he had been right even in the first.

In any case, whatever her influence on his art, it was clear she could win fame for him, since at her word her father would buy what works she chose.

It was a mean aim, and Van Hals knew it. Knowl-

edge of his art, power, true work if possible—but if not, then fame at any price!

Ambition plays a larger part in the lives of most men than women imagine. It may be noble or ignoble in its aim, constant or fitful in its character, but it is part of man's nature, and should never be ignored; it may sleep from indolence, or fall into a stupor from despair, but practically it is undying. Woman is slow to recognize this. How should she know it who bids ambition go, without a sigh, at the whisper of love? She who, whatever her aim has been, will lay down name and fame joyfully at her husband's feet? She may learn to know that something in addition to herself is necessary to man's happiness, else he is no true man; but that something might be desired instead of herself is beyond her imagining.

If any woman could sympathize with her husband's ambition it was Myrtle van Hals, who would have given her life to see Rupert famous; but the very greatness of her belief in him—lately it might more truly be said, the very height of her hope for him—forbade impatience. The end for which he looked could only be attained by years of toil and waiting. She could not understand Rupert's intolerance of delay and fretting against fate, and found a woman's difficulty in sympathizing with his incapacity for small self-denials.

The rough and badly cooked food which the young untrained servant at Drock set before him was a keen trial to Rupert, who had been accustomed to his father's luxurious little dinners or to the French cooking of a club or a restaurant. Gradually the days in the week became fewer and fewer when he dined at

the farm with Myrtle ; his work kept him in Amsterdam, he said, and Myrtle rejoiced that during his absence she was able to practice some small economy.

For alas ! economy was very necessary. The farm was not successful under a master who passed his time in a distant studio, and left the practical management of it to his wife. The winter had been wet and cold, and many of the cows had died, so Rupert, disheartened by failure and urged by the necessity for ready money, determined to sell half the stock. It was poor economy, for it added to his income at the expense of his capital, but he called it retrenchment, and pointed out to his wife that he would now dispense with the services and appropriate the wages of one of the men. Van Hals received no salary as manager ; it suited his father better to allow him the produce than to pay him, so that he was practically the owner of the farm, though without the power to sell the land.

The lieutenant had paid one visit to Drock, accompanied by Paul. The old valet looked with supercilious disdain on the farm and its inmates ; to him it was within a gentleman's prerogative to get into debt, but not to turn farmer. And since his master's son had maintained his correct position in Paul's eyes until his marriage with a farmer's daughter, the valet attributed this descent in the world, which to some extent involved the whole family, to Myrtle, and despised her accordingly.

" Where's Rupert ? " asked the lieutenant, as, wrapped in a fur overcoat, he shivered by a fire, the smoke of which was driven across the room in fitful gusts.

"He is at the studio this morning," said Myrtle, conveying by her tone, as a dutiful wife will, that his being at the studio was merely an unfortunate accident.

"What studio?" asked the old soldier. He knew well enough that Rupert had a room in Amsterdam where he worked, but it was one of the things he chose to ignore.

"I thought you knew," said Myrtle timidly; "he works at modeling when he has time. He has some orders, sir, and I trust will get on."

The lieutenant looked at her with a curious expression.

"You trust!" he said, with a laugh. "I know; I know the English well, my dear—and English women. They trust—it is their way. In your place a Frenchwoman would know."

"I do not understand," said his daughter-in-law, bewildered.

"No? Well, you are an amiable wife, my dear, and I congratulate Rupert. But you are certainly confiding to allow your husband a mysterious studio in Bohemia, while you stop at Drock and trust!"

"Who should trust, if not a wife?" Myrtle said, a little indignantly; "and the studio is not in Bohemia."

Then she saw what he had meant, and blushed at her own stupidity and the reflection on Rupert.

Her father-in-law was smiling his cynical, man-of-the-world smile, his chin buried in the fur collar of his coat, his feeble lip dropped at one corner, his long eyebrows bristling over his twinkling eyes, his shrunken body crouching into the warmth of his wraps, and looking like a sort of human rat.

As the English girl looked at him, she drew away instinctively.

"You do not know Rupert," she said, annoyed at the old man's silence; "and you are right when you say English wives trust their husbands; they do always."

"Always, my dear," answered the lieutenant, "until they find out, and then! Then, I tell you candidly, I would rather have a French wife. The French wife spies and suspects, it is true, and that is disagreeable; but when she makes her little discovery she says, 'Ah well, *mon ami* is the same as other husbands, only not so much so; and at least I know the worst.' But the English wife! Ah, my dear child, I know her well. It is trust, trust, trust, blindness, confidence— and then suddenly, indignant upbraiding, scorn, 'Never more, never more!'"

Rupert's father held up his hands in illustration of the horrified gesture of the English wife, and Myrtle smiled. It was all so exaggerated, so "foreign," she could face it best with a smile. And after all, this view of Rupert's absence was nothing; she had dreaded that his father would complain of his neglect of the farm, and that would have been far more difficult to defend.

The lieutenant lunched with her, and took a feeble survey of his property, leaning heavily on Paul's arm, and Myrtle noted how much he had aged of late. Then the uncomfortable day came to an end, and he left. When Rupert came home Myrtle told him all about his father's visit, and of her relief at the view he took of the studio. Her husband laid his hand on her head, as she sat at his feet by the fire.

"Then you are not jealous, my wife?"

"Jealous?" she cried, with a happy smile, "not of other women, Rupert. If I am ever jealous it will be of things that keep you from home—men's parties, club meetings, smoking rooms; things that hold you from work as well as from me; foolish things to be jealous of, dear!"

"Yes, very foolish," Rupert said gravely. He was thinking, with some self-reproach, that perhaps even the wife who trusted him would be jealous of Daria Leon—if she knew. With a sudden burst of tenderness he turned to Myrtle.

"My darling," he said, "I have a fancy to-night that no woman in all the world would be so good to turn to in trouble as you. It seems as if one could almost welcome trouble for the sake of being comforted. For one thing, I suppose you would not be afraid to let me see your love then. But you are so cold, Myrtle, you English women cannot love—no woman can love like a man."

For one moment she stood irresolute, it was like beating against a rock, assertion for assertion. How could she make him know the love that was her life?

"Rupert," she cried, with her arms about his neck, "did you ever doubt that I loved you? The love that women feel they cannot put into words—it is so sacred, so beyond understanding. I may never in all my life, Rupert, be able to prove it, but if it were ever put to the test,—to any test, quick and terrible, or slow and wearying,—then, my dearest, you would know."

Van Hals was awed by his wife's words, so rare from the lips of the reserved, gracious woman, grave

beyond her years, who seldom spoke of her love; and for a moment he longed to tell her about Daria Leon. And yet, what was there to tell? He did not love her, and it was ungenerous to betray, even to his wife, the Spanish woman's love for him. Besides, he had an instinctive feeling that Myrtle would shrink from accepting a favor from the Jewess, and Van Hals had resolved to accept many favors. So he let the opportunity go, and it did not return.

Dr. Isencraw paid his promised call, and Rupert happened to be at the farm.

The doctor would have scorned to put the question behind his back, but in his presence he asked Myrtle why she had not dined with her husband at Leon's house.

"Is that the Jew you told me of?" Myrtle said, turning her calm eyes on her husband. "He is a a rich patron of Rupert's art, doctor, or we hope he will be; it is not necessary that I should be invited to his house. We could not afford the necessary expense, and I daresay Herr Leon understands. He has a daughter, my husband says."

The two men exchanged looks. Isencraw's thought was: "If I had so sweet a wife, I would not stoop to deceive her;" and Van Hals': "I did well to say nothing to Myrtle; she could not have answered so simply and naturally if she knew."

But he had not done well. The bitter disappointment that came to him as he worked on, and his ease-loving nature pictured what might have been the result of a marriage with Daria, might be battled with, but could not be overcome. Then he would come home tired and disheartened, keenly sensitive

to each bleak wind that blew gray and desolate clouds about the farm, angry at his wife's struggle to be economical, angrier still that economy was a necessity, fretting about money matters, reproaching his father, blaming himself, his fate, his nature—once even bitterly wishing that he had never married.

Myrtle heard him in silence. Her large soul understood; it was the fretting care within that spoke, not Rupert. Only she wished, as she pressed her hands upon her quivering mouth, that he would tell her what troubled him; for she knew, as a loving wife must, that all his heart was not open to her.

It was thus with Rupert and Myrtle when Harvey wrote that he would bring his sister the money due when she came of age. This money, which represented John Prosser's savings for his children, was much thought of at Red Hill Farm.

It had never been invested; it was simply "in the bank" at Exeter, whence to withdraw it was quite a ceremony. Myrtle's share was under two thousand pounds, but to the three loving hearts of whose world she was the center, it seemed great riches. Her mother had not liked to let her go to her husband empty-handed; Myrtle, woman-like, had written home letters in which she had made much of her reception by Rupert's father, and had touched very lightly on her anxieties at the farm. Now the Devonshire girl would prove herself no mean match for the Dutch artist, the Prossers thought; to them it seemed that Rupert van Hals had married money. It was not to be imagined that such a sum could be sent from banker to banker; no, Caleb himself would take his father's legacy. Or, for Caleb was

in bad health, perhaps Harvey might be trusted;—it was understood at Red Hill Farm that Myrtle would be glad of her mother's presence later in the summer.

So Caleb went to the bank and drew out Myrtle's money; and Fanny Prosser made an inner pocket of elaborate construction in Harvey's waistcoat, and with many warnings and "sage advices" the untraveled boy started for Rotterdam. His mission sobered him, and he hardly dare speak to anyone for fear of falling among thieves. It seemed very good to him, when the tossing steamer became steady, and, after a dreary time in the wide river, disembarked her passengers at Rotterdam. On the quay stood Myrtle and her husband. Harvey could already see a change in his sister; she was more matronly, graver, less English; he felt almost shy as she greeted him.

With Myrtle it was different; Harvey was a piece of home, a link with her careless girlhood, a being whom she thoroughly understood without perplexity and mystery. She clung to him and kissed him as she used to do when she was a little girl. Harvey's shyness melted.

"I have got it safe," he whispered.

"It? What have you got safe?" Myrtle asked.

Her brother's sunny face was overshadowed by the greatness of his responsibility.

"Your money," he said, looking around cautiously.

"I had forgotten the money. I want you, my brother. Oh, you are a little boy, Harvey, a very little boy, and I am old—as old as our mother, I think."

"You do look older," said her brother gravely; and then Myrtle remembered her husband.

He came up at the moment, and welcomed Harvey, and said he had found the luggage, and that they would only just catch the train for Amsterdam.

Myrtle was delighted to watch Harvey's simple wonder, and to explain everything; it seemed as if she had been years in Holland.

At Amsterdam they were to rest and dine at Frau Secker's. Rupert excused himself, and went on to his studio, and then the brother and sister talked freely. All the questioning was on Myrtle's side, she was never tired of hearing news from home. She showed Harvey some of the finer streets, breaking into her description of this church and that bridge to ask after a horse or dog at Red Hill Farm. Then she took him to their aunt's, and stout Frau Secker welcomed Harvey.

"He has English cheeks," said Anton Secker's English wife, patting them with her fat dimpled hands. "The Dutch women have fine complexions—it is the damp climate which keeps them fresh; and the men might have the same, but they spoil them with smoking. Smoking from morning till night. They all do it; it keeps off the ague, they say, but I don't know that. Where's thy man, Myrtle?"

Myrtle explained.

"Of course!" said Frau Secker, with much contempt; "always the studio. I should like to know what would become of us if Anton sat writing poetry upstairs, instead of selling cigars! But it runs in the family! Strange tales are told in Anton Secker's shop when men come in for a cigar and a chat at two

o'clock, and they say no one ever sees the color of the old lieutenant's money; and it will soon be the same with the son, I reckon."

"But Myrtle will have her own money," said Harvey, as became his position.

"Well, that is well, if she can keep it. But it's a thousand pities! taking up with a dangling lady's man like that, when Dr. Isencraw would have given his little finger to have her."

"Only that?" asked Myrtle, smiling. She had heard all this before, and it did not disturb her. Frau Secker was no friend to Van Hals.

In the evening the brother and sister went on alone to Drock. Myrtle did not call at her husband's studio, at which Harvey wondered. It was one of the little things which showed that she was not quite at home with her husband. Once she had suggested calling for him, and Rupert had said he might have men there whom he would not care to introduce to her, or a model might be sitting, and now she thought he might not like it, and was afraid to go.

At last Harvey could display his treasure. He took out his pocket-book, and counted the notes, and Myrtle's heart beat fast as she saw the money. How pleased Rupert would be! She listened for his footstep, giving divided attention to her brother as he told her how he and Caleb had been to the bank together, and how he could hardly sleep on the steamer for fear he should be robbed. At length the dog barked, the gate swung, and Rupert's voice was heard in the doorway. Myrtle ran to meet him.

"Harvey has brought my money, dear; come and

see what a rich wife you have married," she said, clinging to his arm.

"A man needs a rich wife nowadays," her husband answered, not very good-temperedly. "There's a fool of a landlord clamoring for my studio rent; and the outlay at first is tremendous—tools, and marble, and all the furniture of a workroom." And Van Hals flung himself into a chair, and buried his face in his hand.

Myrtle was silent; she had learned already, with a quickness of apprehension which argued a certain sharpness in the lesson, that in this mood Rupert was best unanswered.

"How much is the money?" he asked drearily, after a pause.

"Nearly two thousand pounds," said exultant Harvey.

"Well, it will do something—for a time; and it is only for a time we shall want it. I must come to the front—I will!" And Van Hals rose suddenly to his feet, with clenched hands and a flush on his face.

Harvey looked nervous. Myrtle went to her husband, and quietly pushing him back into his chair, sat down by his side.

"My father would be pleased to think he had helped us," she said quietly.

"Caleb wished me to say," began Harvey, with some hesitation, "that he thought the money ought to be settled."

Rupert made an impatient movement, and Myrtle asked how that would be.

"There is generally a settlement," said Harvey, quoting Caleb, "when a woman marries."

"Of course there is," Van Hals said hotly, "when money comes to a woman before marriage; afterward, where the husband and wife have the same interests, and she can trust him, it seems to me different. However, it is as my wife pleases."

Myrtle looked at him a little sadly; she could have trusted him as far as money went better before marriage than now. Rupert van Hals was not careful in money matters.

"I know the English are prudent in this," Rupert went on, annoyed by his wife's silence; "but you are of colder blood than we. Here a girl says: When I give myself, I give all; she does not hold back her money where her heart has gone before."

Van Hals was drawing on his imagination in this speech. It was cowardly and unjust, for it touched his wife just where her woman's heart made her weakest. It was not the first time he had referred to English coldness, and a burning wish filled her heart to show him that she could trust wholly too. With a red spot on each pale cheek, she turned to her brother.

"Say no more, Harvey; my money shall not be settled."

Van Hals was touched.

"We need not decide to-night," he said; "I am not sure how the Dutch law stands about settlements after marriage. We may not need the money; but you understand, Harvey, that just now, at the beginning of my career when outlay is indispensable, a paltry sum coming in as yearly interest would do no good at all. When the prize is high, you must run some risk."

Harvey said no more, and Myrtle did not refer to the matter again while he stayed at Drock. It is probable that when Van Hals was alone with his wife, he convinced her of the necessity, if not the prudence, of making use of some at least of her father's legacy. The rest was placed in Rupert's bank.

CHAPTER XV.

"BELIEVE me, you are unwise in your decision, and will regret it some day," said Daria Leon.

It was one of the rich Jewess' "Sundays," the room, half boudoir, half conservatory, where she received her guests, was full of people, chiefly men, who were laughing and talking in many languages.

Daria herself sat somewhat apart from the rest, talking earnestly to Van Hals. He turned his eyes full of perplexity to hers.

"You think so?" he said, with a sigh.

"I am sure. Listen, my friend; marriage is apt to make a man's work tame. Already other eyes than mine see this result. The very knowledge of the world, the dash of Bohemianism which you naturally give up, was an ingredient not to be despised in the work which charmed the public. You are a cook, sir, who must cater for his customers, and you are leaving out the salt and pepper from your confections. Sugar is very good for children, but we grown-up men and women tire of it."

She spoke lightly, but her words told.

"I am sorry for it, if what you say is true," Rupert said bitterly, "for there is no remedy."

"There is an antidote, which is the next best thing. Go to Rome; live with artists; get inspiration at the fountain head, and fame is certain."

"I cannot."

"See, I appeal to one who has the Roman spirit at his finger tips," Daria said, beckoning with a wave of her fan to a young man who lounged near and touched a guitar lightly now and then. "Give me your decision, for my sculptor and I are at variance. Mr. van Hals has the happiness to be married, as you know——"

There was a silence as her clear tones fell upon the group of talkers. They did not all know that Van Hals was married; indeed, many of them supposed that he would marry Leon's daughter, and therefore the subject was interesting. Daria noted the general start of surprise, and knew its cause; she had perhaps judged it better that the announcement of the event which had caused her such bitter disappointment should come from her own lips.

"He has the happiness to be married, and I am warning him to beware lest art suffers at Love's hands. Would it not be wise to go to Rome, and live for a few months the real artist life of Rome? Tell him, Herr Mehrmann, what do you say?"

The young man with the guitar said he had been a year in Rome, and that if he had had any prospect of marriage he should certainly have stayed two.

A large fair German, who was reading, as if from a book, the music of a new opera just sent from Vienna, looked up quietly at the last speaker, and then turned to Daria.

"If the Señora will allow me to say a word,—who

have had more experience of life and marriage than this gentleman,—I say it is possible to do great work, and yet hold a wife's hand."

No one spoke for a moment. The grand head was bent over the music, to hide perhaps the flood of memory in the eyes, for it was five years since the musician had touched his wife's hand, and she was dead.

"Of course," someone ventured to suggest, "much depends on the lady. Probably Mr. van Hals chose a wife who understood art."

"Probably," said Daria coldly. "She is beautiful,—forgive me, my friend, if I describe her for you; I know your modesty will forbid you to sing her praises,—she is beautiful, as I said, and good, and English, and just a little stern. Is it not so?"

"Not that I know of," laughed Van Hals. Daria was taking a great liberty, but what could he say?

"Pardon! I mean she is English—do you not understand?" Daria asked, smiling at one or two men, who had gathered round her. "For instance, this is the first time since his marriage that our sculptor has been allowed to come here on my Sunday!"

"I protest!" said Rupert; "my wife has nothing to do with it. I am not in Amsterdam on Sunday, that is all. For the rest, I am proud that the Señora has condescended to notice my absence."

He bowed to Daria as he spoke, but she saw the shadow that crossed his face, and knew she had annoyed him. Before she could soften the effect of her last words, another speaker had joined the group, a German with iron-gray hair and coal black eyes, who

might have been mistaken for a Frenchman until one heard him speak.

"The English have no enthusiasm," he said, with emphasis; it was a favorite doctrine of his, and he could not resist giving it words; "they are cold as ice—or rather as stone, for ice will melt. We send them our great actors: they say their gestures are exaggerated, their passion is passion looked at through a magnifying glass. Our despair on the stage is to them ridiculous, and they laugh. Look at a German—he is carried away by good acting; he forgets himself; he is beside himself. Once I took a friend to see Rachel in Paris; it was in Les Horaces, and she played Camille; when she came to the part when Camille hears that her husband is killed by her brother, she tore her clothes off her breast with her two hands—thus," and the enthusiast illustrated wildly on his own coat. "My poor friend felt it intensely. He went home, his brain never recovered; he raved of Rachel all night, and died next morning. See the difference!" with an appeal to his audience, "an Englishman would not have died!"

"I am not sure that the Englishman would not have the best of it," said Van Hals dryly.

"Of course he would have the best of it," cried Daria, who could not allow Rupert's lips to utter even the faintest defense of things English; "it is best to be unmoved, calm, ice-bound; the glacier holds its stored waters safe from waste, and remains the same for a hundred years, reflecting the sun's glitter on a steely surface, and grinding the face of the rock where it has its home. It is better, no doubt," she added, her lip curling, "to be thus safe and cold, than to be

like the mountain torrent leaping out into the sunlight, and losing itself in a wild impulse of joy in the lake on whose bosom it throws itself. Oh, it is better to be an Englishwoman for your own peace, and we of warmer heart may envy her. She sees her husband's picture sent to the Salon, his play given to the public, and sleeps her untroubled sleep by his side, though his eyes may burn with wakefulness. If he fails she is not mad, inconsolable, miserable. No, she turns her quiet eyes on the man she loves and reminds him that his work will probably gain by his disappointment. Ah," said Daria, rising as she spoke, and laughing lightly to disguise the bitter ring in her own words, "you are right, the cold natures have the best of it!"

Then the Jewess moved to another group of guests. She felt she had almost betrayed herself, and must avoid Van Hals for a time. She had set her heart on making him go to Rome. All her father's schemes for ruining the man they both hated were to her as feeble as mortal vengeance might seem to a jealous goddess. They involved loss of money, of position, of reputation—what then? Losses such as these did not touch his wife. It was even probable they would only draw his wife closer to him. Daria might sneer at the Englishwoman's coldness, but she read in the firm mouth and steadfast eyes a power of faithfulness at which she trembled.

Her one aim at present was to withdraw Rupert from Myrtle's influence, and with this idea she had urged his going to Rome.

Gradually the guests left, as the afternoon wore away; coffee had been served, with liquors of delicate tint and scent, but Van Hals did not move.

That sculptor Van Hals made himself too much at home, men commented as they strolled up the Keizer's Gracht; and the Señora allowed him to be too much the center of attraction. By all means let him go to Rome; he was in the way in Amsterdam; and even his marriage made little difference—Leon's daughter did not ask if a man were married before she allowed him to pay her homage.

The heavy portière had fallen behind the last guest. Daria struck a few notes on a guitar, and began to teach her bullfinch a new song. Then when Van Hals moved from the corner where he sat, she started with well-acted surprise.

"You are here still, Herr van Hals? You wish to speak to me? Perhaps my commission is worked out in marble."

"It is not touched," Van Hals said roughly.

"And why?" Daria knew well enough, but wished to have his answer. The group had been last spoken of the night she heard of Rupert's marriage. Did he think her so weak as to withdraw her commission from pique, like a disappointed schoolgirl?

"I could not find a good block of marble at first; then I could not please myself. I cannot finish that group for you, Señora; you must choose another if you will."

The very bluntness of his speech pleased her; he would not speak thus if he were indifferent to her, she thought; his involuntary resistance proved her power over him.

"I will choose another group!" the Jewess said, coming nearer to Van Hals, "and this is my choice: I will keep the doves,—they are gems, they please me,—

but I myself will be the woman who holds them. Many an artist has asked to paint Leon's daughter; now, without asking, you shall model her whether you will or no!"

As she spoke her voice sank to a tone of soft caressing, and she laid her hand on the young sculptor's arm. In a moment the farm at Drock, emblem to him of life's grim reality, the face of his wife, and his allegiance to her, all were forgotten; he kissed the hand that touched him with a fervor that satisfied even Daria.

The new subject fascinated him; he would begin to-morrow; it should be a full length figure; his whole idea of it would be changed, only the doves would remain the same. Then Daria suggested that when the model was completed, he should go to Rome for a few months before he touched the marble.

"You think it necessary?" he asked anxiously; it wounded his pride that she should so harp on his need of training in his art.

"I am no judge," the Jewess said; "I think too highly of your work, I am told, but others—wiser or less influenced by friendship than I—say otherwise. One of your rivals told me he was secure as long as you remained in Amsterdam."

Rupert paced the room, biting his lip with vexation.

"I would give the world to go," he muttered.

Daria was at his side at once.

"And why not go?" she asked. "See, we are friends; tell me, is money lacking?"

"I am a poor man while my father lives," Rupert answered, gloomily.

"Is that all? only while your father lives, do you say? That is simple enough; you must borrow! I would give you the money, as you well know, only you would not take a gift, though we *are* friends?" Van Hals shook his head. "Then you must borrow. My father will lend what you want, and you shall go to Rome. See how brave a woman can be to her friend; I send you from my side, and you never know what it costs me—just because your fame is more to me than our friendship."

But Van Hals hardly heeded her words, or the appealing glance of her velvet eyes; he was thinking of what she had suggested. Should he borrow from Leon? There was Myrtle's money, but alas! nearly half of that had gone in payment of debts and expenses which he told himself could not recur; he had not the heart to take more from her little store. His father must be rich; mean certainly, and hard in money matters, but rich assuredly. Leon could afford to wait for repayment; if Van Hals became famous he might never have to appeal to his father, and fame was very near now. He turned to Daria, who stood patiently by his side. It was easy to be patient; she knew the victory was won.

"I ought to tell you," he said, "that my father's wealth is only inferred by me from his way of living; he is a reserved man, and has told me nothing of my prospects and expectations."

"Your power to repay the loan will not depend on Lieutenant van Hals; your works will bring you riches in a year. But wait here a moment; my father has means of knowing the wealth of every man in Amsterdam; I will set your mind at rest in an instant."

She left him as she spoke, afraid lest his mind would change. She need not have feared; he was in the vortex now, and had ceased to struggle, or to be conscious that his will had once opposed hers.

Daria found her father alone in his cabinet. She asked her question at once. Leon looked at her with a new admiration; he thought she was carrying out his plans for a mere money loss to Van Hals.

"Scruples!" he said, in a tone of slow calculation, "the fool has scruples, and puts them up like a row of dummies for you to knock down! He is an easier victim than I thought; the man who yields at once is less surely in the toils than the weak simpleton who brings forward an argument that it may be answered. Cut down his difficulty for him, Daria; he can pay me five times over on his father's death."

"Is that so?" asked the Jewess, in some surprise.

Her father uttered an impatient exclamation:

"One would think you were a baby, Daria," he said. "When you want to ruin a man you must not flinch because a lie stands in your path! No, it is not so; the father is in my debt already. Go and tell his son that, and lose your revenge!" And the Jew turned to the books full of intricate figures, which covered his table, and said no more.

Daria went back to where Van Hals stood, just as she had left him, among the birds and flowers of her boudoir. She had not thought she would have to tell a lie to gain her end, or at least not this kind of lie, and she hesitated. It was only for a moment; Van Hals turned eagerly to read her answer in her face, and she banished all scruple as she met his gaze.

"My father says you can pay him five times over

if you will, when you come into your property," she said, speaking truth in the letter and not in the spirit, and when Rupert left the Jew's house that evening it was with a chain round his neck whose gilded links might yet prove heavy as lead.

And yet, as the days went on, it was wonderful, if not alarming, to note how soon the neck accustomed itself to the burden. At first he could not bear to think of it ; a chance word from Myrtle would make him wince ; a doubt as to his father's solvency would cause a cold shudder to pass over him.

But before long Van Hals, who had resolved only to draw upon the account, which Leon had opened to him without reserve, when it should be absolutely necessary, had no scruple in adding to his debt merely for the sake of giving a supper party to his friends.

But he said nothing of his position to his wife, and Myrtle, seeing him more cheerful, imagined that her money had relieved him from embarrassment, and rejoiced accordingly.

CHAPTER XVI.

HARVEY PROSSER still remained at the farm, where he drifted into the position of superintendent. The brother and sister were constant companions, and Rupert sought elsewhere for a sympathy which he fancied lacking at home.

Daria Leon had discovered that it would not be possible to give sittings to the sculptor at his studio, so a workroom had been fitted up at Leon's house, and

here Van Hals spent half his days modeling the usurer's daughter.

There is a powerful fascination to a man like Rupert in studying a beautiful woman; the artistic side of Van Hals' nature expanded, and the statue promised to be a fine one. His commission soon became the talk of the art coterie in Amsterdam; and sometimes at Anton Secker's, in the gossip hour, Frau Secker coming into the cigar shop with a preoccupied air, and rolling cigarettes with deft fingers, would catch a word of pity for the neglected wife on the lonely farm, and would surprise all present by a stinging remark of disparagement leveled against Van Hals, the rising artist.

But Myrtle, living her simple life at Drock, heard none of the town's whispers, and bore patiently a lot which her heart knew was far different from her girlish expectations, betraying her disappointment only by her instinctive clinging to her brother.

At last Harvey was summoned home. His mother wrote that Caleb was ill; he had been doing Harvey's work till he could do it no longer. From being a stout man, like all the Prossers, he was shrinking and shriveling daily, until his clothes hung on him like empty sacks. This and much more Fanny Prosser wrote, resenting that Harvey should be pleasuring, as she called it, with his brother so ill. If she could have seen Harvey's face she would have softened her reproaches, for the young farmer's visit to his sister was no pleasure trip.

The last day at Drock came. The brother and sister were very silent, except that Myrtle again and again sent messages to her mother and Caleb. It was

a fine bright morning, and Myrtle walked along the dyke with Harvey. The country below them was one sheet of green, dotted with black and white cows, and crossed by ditches in which the sky was reflected, cold and blue. A few dazzling clouds brought the water to Harvey's eyes as he looked at them; they were hurrying southward as usual, as if pursued by the blast from the North Sea. The whirling windmills gave a sense of unrest to the landscape.

The two slowly pacing figures, which stood out dark against the sky, stopped at the last gate which bounded the farm lands. A mist was in Harvey's honest eyes, as he held his sister in his arms.

"I will give your love to mother," he said, trying to hide with pitiful, stereotyped phrases the trouble that was tearing at his heart, "and tell her you are well and happy. And I will say how pleased Rupert was with your money—Caleb likes to think you are quite a rich wife," Harvey explained, understanding only too well now that this was a delusion of Caleb's.

"Yes," Myrtle answered, holding her brother's hand as if she had yet another message to send; "and, Harvey dear, you need not say that Rupert is not much at the farm; they do not understand his talent at home, and I would not like mother to think——"

To think what? Harvey must ask one question, a question he longed but feared to ask.

"Is he kind to you, Myrtle?" said the country lad wistfully, in a troubled voice.

Myrtle's eyes flashed.

"Kind to me! he is my husband, Harvey." And then she kissed her young brother gravely, and they bade one another good-by.

The little local train by which Harvey was going to Amsterdam stood just across the road. Myrtle watched her brother's solitary figure moving about the primitive station, arranging the luggage, shaking hands with two or three men who knew him, until he took his place in a carriage and the train steamed slowly away. She saw the boyish head at the window, with the sunshine full on his golden curls; a stinging rush of tears filled her eyes, the shining hair was but a yellow blur, there was a flutter of something white waving, and Harvey was gone. Gone! and she had been angry with him; she had resented the question he had asked about her husband—such a simple question too, who but a boy would expect it to be answered?

Her heart smote her that he was going back alone, and she remembered the day Rupert and she had met the boat from England, as we remember days that are very far off. She had asked Rupert to see Harvey on board the steamer at Rotterdam, but he could not, he had important work on hand, he said; so Dr. Isencraw, who had profited by Harvey's presence to come often to the farm, had promised to speed the boy home. Still there was a sense of inhospitality about it which vexed Myrtle; it seemed almost as if Rupert were glad to get rid of Harvey.

She walked slowly back, thinking; she wondered what Harvey would tell her mother about her Dutch home, and what Caleb would say, and whether they would guess—but here she stopped. What was there to guess? she asked herself; only that married life was not exactly what she had pictured when Rupert and she had wandered in the Devon lanes. Myrtle

van Hals was a brave woman and a proud woman, and where her courage failed her pride came to the rescue; so she set about her household work, and allowed herself no time to think, until a little tinkling bell in a wooden steeple reminded her that it was a saint's day, and the good Catholics in Drock were going to evensong, and that Harvey's boat was leaving Rotterdam.

Dr. Isencraw had kept his promise, and as he stood on deck with the young Englishman, he remembered how he had been on that same boat with Myrtle more than two years ago. As he thought of it, and of all that had happened since, he wished that he had spoken to Myrtle about—well, about himself; and yet he knew that words then would have been as futile as wishes were now. He was roused from a reverie by Harvey, who took his arm, and led him to a deserted part of the deck.

"Dr. Isencraw," said Myrtle's brother, "you are a kind friend to me, and I don't know anyone else I can ask to do me this favor but you. I am not happy in my mind about my sister. You see she is in a foreign land, and even her husband's ways are different from ours; and I think she is lonely."

"Lonely!" echoed the poor doctor, who would have asked no better fate than to cheer Myrtle had it been possible; "my dear boy, what can I do for her loneliness?"

"It is not only that," Harvey said, "but she works too hard and is anxious, and—and I am loth to leave her, for she will never tell us if aught ails her; it is not her way. So I want you to watch, and write to me if—if she is in trouble; for my place is at home,

and I must not always be with her and her husband, and if I know someone will send for me,—me, her brother, who has a right to help her,—I could leave her with a happier heart."

Dr. Isencraw had had many opportunities for studying character, and he read Harvey's heart through his troubled face and halting words, and thought he could discern something of the cause of his anxiety about Myrtle. Although Van Hals had been his friend to some extent, he had never thought him worthy of Myrtle Prosser, and of late the doctor had heard rumors in Amsterdam which led him to share Harvey's anxiety.

He laid his hand heavily on the young man's shoulder.

"When I first saw your sister," he said, his face reddening like a girl's, "I thought that if I had been worthy of her and she had cared for me I would like to make her my wife. She did not care for me, and I gave up the idea before I loved her too deeply; still, this will show you that I will watch over her as you who are her brother would, and that you can trust me."

"Thank you," said Harvey, his face full of boyish surprise; "I knew I could trust you before. But I wish, Dr. Isencraw, that she had cared for you. I should not be afraid to leave Amsterdam then."

So Dr. Isencraw knew that it was as he had suspected, and that it was Rupert who made Harvey afraid.

Even as the two men were thinking of him, Van Hals was making his way along the dyke, homeward. The farm lay just in front of him, and had no attrac-

tion for the pleasure-loving sculptor. Bare, unshaded by trees, flanked by out-buildings, it represented the prosaic side of his life, and he hated it. He was going home earlier than usual, because he had made up his mind to speak to Myrtle about his journey to Rome. It was necessary that she should be told of his plans, and at once, for he had that day been to see his father and had informed him of his intended absence. There was not much intercourse between Myrtle and her father-in-law, but the lieutenant liked to be the bearer of bad news, and that this news would be bad to his young wife, Rupert had an instinctive premonition. It was very annoying to be checked in his pleasurable anticipations of a Roman life by the necessity for speaking to Myrtle about it, and in his present mood he was disposed to kick against the inevitable, and to sigh for freedom from wifely supervision.

Myrtle met her husband at the door. "Did you see Harvey, after all?" she asked.

"No," said Rupert, with petulance; "I told you I could not get away."

He had forgotten at the moment that Harvey was not there, and it suddenly occurred to him that his wife might fancy he had waited until she had no brother to appeal to, before announcing his proposed departure.

"I know, dear," Myrtle said gently. "I only thought it was possible you had more time than you expected. It did not matter; Dr. Isencraw was to meet him in Amsterdam."

"It seems to me that Isencraw makes himself a little officious," said Van Hals, who just then was

disposed to find fault with everyone. "I cannot see what you find to like in that man, unless you admire him because he is so proud of the fact that his grandfather was a barber."

"Excuse me," said Myrtle quickly; "he is simply not ashamed of it; and that I do admire."

Rupert passed on into the house, disliking more than ever the task before him. He wondered why he had not told his wife a month ago, or chosen a time when she was tender and gentle; to-day she was grave and cold; he knew her mood well, and dreaded it.

Myrtle followed him into the sitting room, and moved about with a simple dignity, making the table ready for their evening meal. It was evident her thoughts were far away, for she set a cup for Harvey, and pulled his favorite chair to the table, mechanically.

Rupert cleared his throat and spoke nervously.

"It is better to tell you at once, Myrtle, that I am going to Rome next week."

His wife had not a suspicion of the truth. "To Rome, dear?" she said, looking in his face anxiously. "Why, Rupert? is your father sending you?"

"No; it has nothing to do with my father. The fact is my friends represent to me that I am not doing myself justice here; I have been successful up to a certain point, but now my work wants polish, wants just what Rome alone can give."

"What friends say this?" asked Myrtle, with just a faint touch of scorn about her mouth.

"Friendly critics; people who understand art—which you do not, my dear," her husband answered quickly, with some loss of temper. Myrtle was not taking the news at all as he wished.

"Rich men, perhaps, who can afford the luxury of an art-training, which I grant is good for those who have money for it; but we have not."

Van Hals was relieved; if this was her only objection, he could easily remove it.

"You are right, Myrtle. At present we could not afford it, though it will not be expensive; but friends have come forward,—the father of the Spanish lady I mentioned to you,—and I have borrowed the money."

"Borrowed!" his wife said, below her breath. "Oh, Rupert, is not that like losing our independence? It sounds almost like charity. My father had such a dread of charity. Take *his* money, Rupert, if you must go, but do not borrow."

How could he tell her that he had borrowed more than he knew, already? At first he made a note of the sums he drew from Leon, but one night a friend, also in debt, advised the burning of his memorandum book as the first step to a light heart, and since then he had lost count. Besides, he had sometimes fancied that this loan from her father, suggested by Daria, was a delicate way of making him take a gift from herself, and though at first Van Hals had chafed at this, its extreme convenience had speedily reconciled him to what his wife would have called charity.

"You do not understand, Myrtle," her husband explained with a certain condescension of manner; "you have lived in a small world, and I do not blame you in the least. These sacrifices are necessary to a man who would make a mark in the world. Of course it is foolish to run into debt in business, but if I come to the front at all, it must be in the next year or two.

You would not have me wait for my father's death before I move, I suppose?"

"I would not have you trust in your father at all, Rupert," his wife said gravely; "not in his wealth, I mean. He may live for years, and it would be horrible to wish otherwise. Oh, Rupert!" she cried, rising and coming closer to his side; "I wish you could be strong, and trust to yourself alone. Deny yourself—I would help you; live quietly on the farm—we can just do it with economy; and put by all you make by your models for this visit to Rome. In another year you could afford it, just to go there and live simply and work—you do not want luxury for art."

But luxury was just what Van Hals did want, and like a spoiled child that has set its heart on a pleasure, he could endure no waiting. The truth that lay under his wife's words stung him. She urged self-denial—did she imply he was selfish? She spoke of trusting to himself—did she think him wanting in self-reliance? He pushed her away from him angrily.

"It is easy for you who sit at home to preach," he said. "Women do no work, their life is one long rest; they cannot forsee trouble as men can. I tell you we cannot live on in this miserable farm long; I only took it until I saw my way to better things. But I suppose you like it; you meet me with a cheerful face, and expect me to be cheerful with a prospect of another year of this drudgery!"

His wife listened, and her heart turned to stone. Was this the reward for her patient concealment of her disappointed hopes? He blamed her because she tried to look happy, and put on cheerfulness when he was by. What drudgery had fallen to his share? she

asked herself indignantly. She had pinched and contrived that he might not know what a little way the scanty money went, and he imagined she had been contented with her narrow lot.

Rupert's injustice hardened her, as injustice always does, but while she resented this, Myrtle knew that her husband's hand held another weapon, against which she might steel her heart in vain, for he had spoken of leaving her without regret. Some women would have clung to him, and implored him to stay with them; Myrtle could not. If it was his choice to go, no word of hers should keep him by her side.

And yet, it would have been better if, instead of waiting for his regret, she had expressed her own, and it is possible that he too was listening for a word from her lips which never came.

Myrtle asked questions without much purpose, because she dared not be silent.

"When do you go?"

"Next week."

"How long shall you be away?"

"I cannot tell; all the summer, I suppose."

"And you go quite alone?" She said the words slowly, and with pure surprise. That he could so go, and leave her, and for so long, and quite alone, was writing itself on her heart, and forcing itself to her lips.

Rupert, conscious that there was cause for suspicion, felt himself suspected, and flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Of course I go alone! Great Heavens! was it for this I married? to be questioned and hindered, and held back from fame—the only thing that makes life

worth anything to me! They are right who say an artist should not marry."

Then Myrtle's self-restraint gave way, and a burning anger made her speak.

"I have not hindered you, Rupert," she said, pale and indignant; "but your own weakness, and your false friend's praise. You told me in England that I could help you because I told you the truth about your work, but you resent anything but flattery now; and I cannot flatter. The fame to which you would sacrifice your wife is but a poor ambition if you will not bear a year's self-denial for it; and it is not worth your independence, and yet that you give for it freely. You scorn women—you choose a wife and think she will be happy and honored by the crumbs of affection you fling to her; you had no right to take her from her home, and make her endure a life you will not share. And oh, husband, if fame were all you cared for, why did you ask me for my love?"

The woman's cry had broken out at last, and Myrtle van Hals sank down at her husband's feet and sobbed like a child. She might scorn him,—sometimes she did scorn his weakness,—she might see his faults, but she loved him.

And Rupert? He rejoiced that she was reasonable at last, and was flattered by his wife's evident affection; he soothed, caressed, forgave her—even asked her, though he felt it to be a work of supererogation, to forgive him. And then he spent the rest of the evening in painting their future life: this statue of the Jewess must make his fame—it was grand in clay; after he had worked in Rome for a short time—the short time was in deference to Myrtle—he would re-

turn and begin it in marble ; they would pay all their debts,—he had been assured his father's fortune was large, and the Jewess would give a high price for the statue,—and Myrtle's honest English little heart, which dreaded debt, and did not see that life had at times necessary evils, should be troubled no more.

And Myrtle lay back in her chair and listened, much as a mother listens to her boy's enthusiastic castle-building ; with a sigh for the memory of a bygone time when she too dreamed as he did, with a large patience of the egoistical story in which he is playing the imaginary hero, with a tear for the inevitable awakening, and with a hope which is more than half a prayer that, after the enthusiasm and the disappointment, he may achieve a greatness which shall be better than all his dreams.

CHAPTER XVII.

If it is true in one sense that the absent are always wrong, it is equally true in another sense that the absent are always right.

For absence softens faults as distance effaces detail. And death, the supreme absence, so haloes sins with pity that they seem but the shadows of virtues which might have been.

Rupert van Hals was in Rome, and far from feeling resentment at his leaving her, Myrtle made excuses for him day by day. Surely Shakspere never showed deeper knowledge of woman's character than when he made Desdemona answer Emilia's question : "Who hath done this deed ?" with the defiant words :

"Nobody; I myself." While a woman loves a man, he is her king and can do no wrong. In Rupert's absence Myrtle screened him even from her own upbraiding; it was herself who had been to blame.

During the few days which passed before he left Amsterdam, Rupert had been very thoughtful for his wife's comfort; he had even almost given up going to Rome. It is so easy to almost give up!

He had bidden her write and ask her mother to come to her, but this Myrtle would not do at present. She might defend her husband to herself, but she could not bear to parry her mother's questions.

So she bade Rupert good-by with a brave face and a sinking heart, as women do, and went back to the farm alone. She suffered much from nervousness at first. She would lie awake half the night, listening with strained sense, until she could not distinguish between the terrible sound of the pumps the mills were working, and the beating of her own pulses in her ears. Happily the nights were short. Sometimes she would awake after dreaming she was at home in Devonshire, and pulling aside her blind would see the weird Dutch country laid out before her like a map, each straight canal and ditch reflecting the white watery dawn, and the big boat sails stalking past like giants, the only moving things in the landscape. For generally at this time the mills were at rest, and poor Myrtle would look out at her line of dreaded sentinels, and wonder if some day she would escape and pass beyond them. But she had chosen her place, and must keep it, and she was too proud to complain.

Rupert wrote, telling of his hard work in the studio

to which he had an introduction. And his wife read the letters as wives do, passing lightly over his descriptions of the Vatican and the churches and the galleries, and lingering long over the brief sentence in which he said he missed her, and bade her take care of her health for his sake. Soon the letters spoke less of work, and somewhat more of the kindness of friends by whose invitation he went much into society; through these friends, too, he had obtained one or two commissions, and was more sanguine of success than ever; but he did not speak yet of his return.

Her husband's last letter came to Drock one Saturday. Saturday was a weary day, when Myrtle paid the men's wages and tried hard to make the money go far; if the week had been good she rejoiced; if not, she counted up how much she must draw out of the bank on Monday, for she had refused to get into debt.

The foreman now acted as a sort of overseer, for it was impossible for Myrtle to take what ought to have been Rupert's place except when he was at home. The man was honest enough and careful, but still weeks were rare when Myrtle had not a few pounds to make up from her father's legacy, and rarer still when, on laboriously counting up the Dutch money that always seemed unfamiliar to her, she found a surplus to add to her little store.

This special Saturday was a bad one; there were two or three unpaid bills lying on the table where Myrtle sat, her head on her hands, poring over figures which persistently came to a different total each time they were added up. She stretched out her hand

languidly enough, as the clatter of wooden shoes on the brick floor made her look up, and she saw a letter in her Dutch maid's hand.

It was from Rupert, and as his wife read it, weak in body and worried in mind, with cares and responsibilities pressing upon her, and her very bravery daunted by loneliness, she burst into passionate tears. He was so gay, so successful, so sure of fame and wealth; so happy, she thought, a little sadly, he did not seem to miss his wife. After all, would he not have been better unmarried? But that way she would not let her thoughts drift—once they had wandered far enough to frighten her, and while she had power to check them she would. She gathered the scattered papers that lay on the table with hands that shook and trembled, then hearing steps and voices, dried her eyes hurriedly, and saw burly Anton Secker and his wife pass the window.

"So, so," said Anton, nodding his head slowly, and with a grave and solemn look on his round face, "it is best; you have heard, my dear."

His glance at her tear-stained face, and at the open letter in her hand, could have but one meaning for Rupert's wife. With a loud cry she fell forward into the cigar merchant's arms. When Frau Secker had scolded her husband and sent him out of the room, Myrtle opened her eyes.

"It is Rupert," she said, with white lips; "tell me."

"No, no! I know nothing of your man, Myrtle. It is just my Anton's foolishness. Don't think anything, or ask questions, but come home with us—this farm's enough to make one see ghosts in every corner." And Anton Secker's wife panted and patted

Myrtle's hand, and sighed and nodded, just as her thoughts required it, until it dawned upon her that Myrtle would not be easy until she knew their errand.

"My dear child," she said confidentially, "it is Caleb, your half-brother, you know; he is dead, poor dear, and your mother wrote to me to break it to you gently, and so we came over, and——"

The kind-hearted woman could say no more. Her niece, as she called Myrtle, had always puzzled her; now she was half-frightened at the look on her face.

"Leave me," Myrtle cried, when her aunt hesitated, "leave me just a little. I will come home with you. I will get ready; but leave me a little, alone."

Then Frau Secker left her, and Myrtle, with that strange power over tears which comes to one sometimes in lesser griefs, waited until she had gone and the door was shut, then turned her head and cried silently for Caleb.

There was a sense of self-reproach about her sorrow. She had been so sure at first that it was Rupert about whom they came to tell her, that Caleb's name carried a certain relief with it. And yet, as she thought of all his goodness to her mother and to her; of his self-denial, which she understood better now; of his illness, which had almost seemed to date from her marriage, she knew, as she had not known before, that Caleb would have been a happier man if she had not married Rupert, and felt almost as if her hand had given him his death wound.

She was quiet when the Seckers came back an hour after. Anton had been making a tour of the farm, and his wife had been packing Myrtle's things with the assistance of the Dutch servant, who, delighted

at finding a sympathizing listener, had pictured her young mistress' solitude in gloomy colors. All Myrtle's strength seemed to have left her. Too much exhausted to speak, she walked slowly to the train leaning on Anton's broad arm.

"Say good-by to Drock," said her aunt, trying to rouse her from sad thoughts, as they caught the last glimpse of the farm from the window of the railway carriage.

"I wish it were a real good-by," Myrtle said, with a half smile. "Drock is the dreariest place in the world to me."

It was a real good-by. Myrtle never saw the bare farm and terrible windmills again, but a time came when the desolation of the life there seemed peace to her who had harder things to bear than loneliness. Sorrow's battalions were coming to Myrtle van Hals, although for a little while they were kept in check by baby fingers.

She had her old room in the Secker's house, and there, where she had dreamed of the man who had saved her from drowning in the canal more than two years before, she lay with happy shining eyes, and with Rupert's son upon her breast.

Caleb's death had altered all their plans. Mrs. Prosser was to have been with Myrtle when her child was born, but she could not leave Harvey, broken-hearted as the poor boy was, and full of care how best to fill Caleb's place, so her visit to her daughter was given up for the present.

It softened Fanny Prosser's grief, though that was deep and sincere for the man who to some extent had represented her husband to her, to think of Myrtle

and her little son ; but to Harvey the thought of his sister's happiness only gave added cause for anger : had not the happiness, and the man who shared it, had a hand in Caleb's death ?

Had not his brother, knowing he must die, and indeed not caring to live, said to him, as Harvey bathed his face with more than a woman's gentleness :

" I'd like to go, Harvey; don't ask for me to stay, lad, even for your sake. I don't mind telling you, for there's none I've loved as I loved you, Harvey, that life's not been the same to me since I wrote that letter that brought Myrtle's husband to the farm. You see he was a foreigner and a papist, and those two things my father could not bear. I've sometimes thought," he added, with the smile of one who puts earth's weakness away from him, " that there's not so much in that, after all, if only the man's true and honest behind it ; but father thought different. And anyhow, Harvey, boy, I should like to go and tell him how it was."

The sentences had been spoken with difficulty from the first ; at the end there were long pauses, unbroken save by the clock's labored ticking, and the restless movement of the dogs outside, uneasy because of the unwonted lights in the house.

Toward morning Caleb kissed his brother quietly, and drawing his hand out of Harvey's clasp, folded it in the other on his breast. The boy went to call his mother, but when she came Caleb had gone, as he wished, to tell his father " how it was."

Rupert did not return home at once on hearing of the birth of his son. In fact, now that Myrtle was at her Aunt Secker's, he wrote, and his anxiety about her

was relieved, he thought it might be better to spend one more month in Rome, where he was daily making fresh friends and therefore preparing for additional fame.

Myrtle's new happiness made her at once yield to her husband's wish. Why should he come back if his work in Rome was prosperous? It must be duty that kept him away, she thought, since Amsterdam held that loadstar of attraction—the face of his infant son.

Dr. Isencraw, sitting with Frau Secker in the red-curtained room beyond the cigar shop, thought otherwise.

"He ought to be here," he said briefly, as he made his report on the mother and child.

"Of course he ought to be here," said the cigar merchant's wife, pouring out a glass of one of her own liqueurs. "Ah, doctor, you had plenty of chance two years ago, why did you not manage to win her heart while you were mending her arm? It's too late now."

"Yes, it's too late now," Isencraw answered, his fair face flushing. He had often put the question to himself before, but not quite as Frau Secker worded it. He drank the liqueur, and played nervously with the cut-glass stopper which lay on the table; it fell to the ground and was broken.

"There!" the doctor said, angry with himself, "there is bad luck. Pardon, Frau Secker! Do you think she is happy?"

"If she is, it is because of the child; no Van Hals ever made a woman happy."

"That reminds me, his father has been ill; at least so I am told. Do you know anything?"

"I know he may as well be dead for any good he does," answered Anton Secker's wife indignantly. She was annoyed at the breakage of one of her favorite cut stoppers, and vented her annoyance on the lieutenant. "He never paid them anything for managing the farm, and made them responsible for losses; an old miser, he will part with nothing while he lives, except for his own comfort, and yet I expect he'll think his son ought to be sorry when he's dead."

In the evening Isencraw's vague report was confirmed by the arrival of Paul, the lieutenant's valet. He had been to Drock, and had been sent on to Secker's; his master was ill, unconscious, or at least unintelligible, and Paul thought Mr. Rupert ought to know. Anton gave him Van Hals' address. Did the lieutenant know he had a grandson? he asked the valet. Paul thought not; there were unopened letters on his table; if any intimation had been made to his master it probably lay there. The lieutenant had read no letters for a week. Was there no hope? Anton asked, with unmoved placidity. Paul believed not; he spoke reticently, and as if he could not say more without his master's authority, and left to telegraph for Rupert.

There was no hope, and there was something of irony in the set phrase. In the lieutenant's case who was there to hope he would live? His son knew nothing of his father's state, and would not have troubled himself over-much with hopes that he might recover. Myrtle hoped, a little, for her father-in-law's sake, that he would live, and see his grandson. No one else; not even Paul.

So the cynical man of pleasure closed his eyes, even

as the simple-hearted farmer on the Devon moor had closed his, and went out into the great silence, and read the answer to the riddle of life, which the two had solved so differently here.

Even if it were possible that this brief existence—which to most of us is nothing if it is not a promise of a greater—should be the end; if he who was carried out with much stateliness, and laid in his tomb with the impressive ceremony he had often derided, was right, and he who rested beside the father he had loved, in a grass-covered English grave, was wrong, even so it was better to have been Caleb Prosser than August van Hals.

For better than happiness, higher than fame, is that simple faithfulness to trust which carries its own reward even through sorrow and oblivion.

Myrtle, out of the wealth of her mother-riches, looking on the face of her first-born son, pitied Caleb with a strange new pity, because he was a solitary man. She need not have pitied him—he would not have changed the knowledge that his dead father died fearlessly because he trusted his son, and that he had not failed in that trust, for either smile of wife or kiss of child. We are too quick to say: I cannot bear this thing or that. Bear on, oh, brother; there shall come a joy out of your own steadfastness which shall exceed all lower happiness, as the positive peace of memory's possession exceeds all the negative sweetness of forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was late at night when Rupert van Hals arrived in Amsterdam. He drove at once to Anton Secker's; and Anton's wife led the way upstairs. As the sculptor followed her through the silent house, all that part of his life with which Myrtle was connected seemed like a dream. While he had been in Rome, his visit to England, his marriage, the simple dreary life at Drock, had crossed his thoughts as if they belonged to another self. He came back to his present homely surroundings as a man awakes in a sordid garret after visions of fame and feasting.

A door was held open before him, a nightlamp glimmered, a nurse with frilled cap and finger on lip beckoned him, and he passed on and stood looking at his sleeping wife. It was all real then; here were Myrtle and his child; his father lay dead in the Heeren Gracht, and there was work in the world that was not all success.

When Rupert left the Seckers' he walked through the deserted streets to his father's house.

Paul was waiting for him.

"The funeral is to-morrow, sir," he said.

Van Hals did not speak.

Such grief as he had felt for the loss of a father, who had been as a stranger to him, until some impulse of selfishness or of self-assertion had made him a tyrant, was past. He knew he had before him the one man who could tell him if his father's riches were a reality, and he sought how to frame a question which should set his doubts at rest. For at rare intervals he had

doubts, although as a rule he felt certain that he would be heir to the lieutenant's wealth.

"Will you take some food, sir? or will you like to go to bed?" Paul said, lingering near the door of the room where Rupert sat.

"I slept in the train; I am not tired, but you can give me a glass of claret. And, Paul, where are my father's keys—I had better look for any papers there may be."

Paul stepped forward and laid his hand on two files of bills.

"These are the papers," he said grimly.

"Unpaid accounts?" Rupert asked, in no wise disconcerted. "Those can be settled at leisure. But there is a will, I suppose?"

"My master made no will."

The valet made this assertion as one who knows what he is saying, but it was curious that knowledge of this importance should be the servant's instead of the son's.

"My master said it would make no difference," Paul added, and it began to dawn upon Van Hals that the man was in some way triumphing over him.

"Give me the keys and leave me," Rupert said angrily.

The valet pulled open a drawer in a *secrétaire* and left the room. There lay many keys, and Rupert seized them impatiently, and without difficulty fitted them into various drawers. There were some choice cigars, a few letters, physician's prescriptions, but no will.

Rupert called Paul again, and asked what other locked-up places there were in the house. None, the

valet said; his master had nothing to conceal; he locked nothing. These drawers which Mr. Rupert had searched Paul himself had locked after his master's death. A cold moisture covered Rupert's forehead; his hands were damp, and there was a horrible misgiving at his heart.

"Did my father leave no message?" he asked at last.

No message lately; he had not spoken since his fatal illness, but he had often told his valet that in case of his death Mr. Rupert would have to know everything.

"Everything? What?" Van Hals cried loudly.

Paul pointed silently to the room where the coffin lay, and shook his head.

"It will be a blow to you, sir," he said. They were the first words of sympathy he had spoken; the silent indication of the presence of death in the house calmed Rupert's excitement, and the change in the man's manner made him hope at least for information.

"You understand, Paul," he said, "that although I have no doubt I am my father's heir, yet his peculiar notions prevented his telling me the amount of his income. In the absence of letter or message to me, you seem the only person who can give me any idea of this, and you will see that it is better I should know."

Paul stood before his master's son, his white head bent, his attitude one of respectful attention.

"My master, sir," he began, his dim eyes glancing at Rupert, "lived, I understood, on madame your mother's money, as long as possible. It ceased two years ago. The farm at Drock is still in the family, sir, and this house is, I believe, my master's." The

valet paused, went to a table on which an inkstand stood out of its place, arranged it correctly, and came back to where he had been standing. "There is nothing else. Except debts."

As he said these two short sentences, Paul passed his hand across his mouth, with a peculiar action, as if to exorcise the ghost of an evil smile.

Rupert caught the dull gleam of his triumphant eyes.

"By my soul," the young man said, "I think you are the devil who inspired my father!"

Then he gathered up the two files of papers which lay on the table before him and went to his own room. But he could not sleep. He told himself that the servant's story was improbable, but in his heart he believed it, and knew that Paul was exulting over him. In this he was not deceived; the valet had no personal grudge against Rupert, but long years of service under his master had caused him to look through the old lieutenant's eyes, and he was triumphant simply because the young man had been successfully hoodwinked. Once, and once only, Rupert had overreached his father; the occasion was when, by means of his uncle's legacy, he had paid Kranz to be his substitute, and so had evaded the military service which was the lieutenant's one hope for his son. The old soldier never forgot his mortification, or forgave the author of it; and the valet knew this, and sympathized with his master simply because no other ideas than those of his master were ever presented to him. He had a certain pride, too, in the house he served, and made it a point of honor that no one should discover the straits the lieutenant was put to. Even the funeral was to display no poverty, and all the arrange-

ments were made by Paul in accordance with instructions received months ago from his master.

Van Hals threw himself on his bed, but never closed his eyes. He could think of nothing but the future, when his debts must he paid. He had spent a great deal in Rome, how much he did not know; but more than he would have spent if he had not believed himself the son of a rich man. It was the day after the feast, and Rupert had a moral headache, and everyone knows that at such times it is a relief to throw the blame of one's own weakness on other shoulders. If his father had been alive, or had been longer dead, the reproaches which rose to his son's lips would have been uttered. But at least it was fitting that Rupert should think no ill of his father while his coffin lay in the house.

So he waited, holding his very thoughts back until after the funeral. Then, when the pomp and solemnity of the Roman ceremonial was over, and the one or two old men who called themselves the friends of his father had mourned him, chiefly because in his death they felt the chill shadow of their own, when the son had shaken their cold hands, and had given the priest his fee, when he had sat an hour with Myrtle and warned her that he must devote the next hours to business, he entered his old home once more, determined to know all.

This time he devoted his attention to the two files of documents Paul had shown him. One consisted of unpaid bills, chiefly for wines, and luxuries such as fruit and cigars; these were not hopeless, and Rupert breathed more freely. But a glance at the second file alarmed him.

The papers on it seemed, as far as he could understand them, to refer to loans; some were paltry sums, others larger. Rupert found himself mentally adding them up with a horror increasing as the amount grew formidable. He sprang to his feet with an oath. What was there to pay all this? A large desk lay open before him, apparently placed there with a purpose. He opened it, and found documents relating to the Drock farm, and to the house in which he was. Hurriedly estimating what they would realize when sold, he turned again to the terrible pile of bills falling due. A name caught his eye. He seized the paper on which it was written; there was no mistake—it referred to a loan from Leon to his father.

He had been duped, and doubly duped! With the open paper in his hand he was out in the street and walking rapidly to Leon's house. One or two passers-by eyed him curiously. He read in their faces that his look was unusual, and thrusting the paper into his pocket buttoned his coat over it.

For the first time he made his way to the door at the back of the money-lender's house; he did not want to see Daria.

In the ante-room people sat waiting as usual. Van Hals was too proud and too impatient to take his place with these humble clients, and he went to a clerk sitting in a sort of office, and said he must see Leon at once. The man took his card and went to the Jew's room. In ten minutes a bell rang.

"Now," the clerk said, pointing to a door, and Rupert walked toward it with unsteady feet. At the entrance to the dark and narrow passage down

which he was to go, a man brushed against him, and then uttered a servile apology. Something in the voice struck Van Hals as familiar, and, turning, he recognized Kranz. The man had always seemed to the sensitive artist a creature of ill omen, and meeting him just now, he turned away with a gesture of disgust; further than this his presence in Leon's house did not disturb him.

The money-lender sat by his table with his face in shadow. Rupert, without greeting of any kind, thrust the paper he had brought with him into his face.

"This is your bill?" he said.

"Possibly," answered Leon, preparing to place glasses on his nose as if to examine the document.

Rupert could not wait.

"You lent my father money!" he cried, with a sort of challenge.

"To be paid only at his convenience," said the Jew, with his blandest smile.

"My father is dead."

"To be paid only at your convenience," repeated Leon, as if the lieutenant's death could have no further importance.

"That is not what I came to speak of," the young man said, with more dignity than Leon expected. "The debt must be paid, and by me. But how is it that when you offered to lend me money, you told me I should be able to pay you fully on my father's death. Why, at that very moment you were my father's creditor!"

"Was I, indeed?" said the Jew, putting on a look of grave concern. "Let me look at the amount?

Ah ! my dear sir, it is explained, the sum is so small ; these small loans are managed by my clerks."

"Then when you assured me my father was rich, you simply meant that you knew nothing about the matter ! As it happened, you deceived me. It was no lie, although it would have been a mere chance if you had hit upon the truth. Well, I have been a fool, and must take the consequences. Will you ruin me at once, or will you wait ? "

"I will wait," Leon said, showing his yellow teeth for a moment in keen appreciation of the truth he had spoken at last.

It would be absurd to crush this poor fly at once ; he must struggle a little in the web into which he had fallen—struggles were exhausting. Suppose the usurer exacted now the payment of the debts of father and son, where would be the revenge he promised himself ? Revenge for the slight put by this Christian on Leon and his daughter. No, he must be allowed to climb higher before his fall was determined, and to this end he must be conciliated.

"I will wait," Leon repeated, his black eyes roaming as if in search of something, but continually, with apparent inadvertence, crossing Rupert's face. "But I must ask your courtesy on one point, for even a money-lender has his pride." The words were humble, but the curl of his lip which accompanied them befitted a Leon of Spain. The Jew approached Van Hals with a long roll of parchment in his hand.

"See," he said, pointing to lines of figures, "these are the details of a loan to the Russian Emperor. I could show you other papers of similar import ; but do I think a man, or a ruler, or a nation, insolvent

because they borrow? By no means. I understand they are undertaking great schemes. That your father borrowed from me would not have alarmed me, had I known it—any more," Leon added, with a gracious bending of his body, which for the moment threw his face into deeper shadow, "than it alarms me for your future that you do me the same honor. If you will allow me, the only difference your father's lamented death shall make is that I look to the successful sculptor to pay me, instead of to the wealthy heir."

"Don't tempt me," Van Hals said, turning away his head. "I must apologize for my first hasty words; I see it was not your intention that I should incur a debt on false expectations. In fact, I see that such small matters as debts of these amounts are beneath your notice. My father's loan shall be paid as soon as the farm and house are sold. For my own, it is different. Can you tell me the amount placed to my credit?"

Leon glanced at his watch.

"I have an appointment in five minutes. If you will excuse me, I will instruct my clerk to send in the items to your house."

Van Hals yielded. He turned to go away, much as a man who had fancied himself ill might leave a great physician after being assured that his symptoms were imaginary—with a humiliating sense of his own unimportance and of the condescension of the listener to whom he has been stating his case.

"I thought I remembered the face of a man who met me at your door," Van Hals said, with a nervous return to ordinary topics; "Kranz, a poor devil who

has been a soldier. I wondered what acquaintance you could have with him."

The Jew, sure of his victim, hardly cared to disguise his contempt.

"Bah!" he said, "do you not see that among my many friends, there may be some who might on occasion serve as tools?"

CHAPTER XIX.

LEON'S daughter was impatiently waiting the return of a messenger.

She had been more disturbed than her father on hearing of Van Hals' visit to the usurer. To Leon, Rupert's discovery that he was a poor man simply meant that he must be entrapped to his ruin another way; to Daria, Rupert's ruin was no triumph, if he was left under the influence of his wife; and she knew by a subtle instinct that in his poverty he would turn to Myrtle for sympathy.

A week had passed since his return from Rome, and Rupert had not called at the Jew's house. Daria would endure no longer suspense, but sent for him; it was intolerable that he should be able to do without her.

He was not able to resist her, in any case, and followed her messenger at once.

"Forgive me for asking you to come at a time like this," the Jewess said, greeting him, "but we are old friends."

"Are we old friends?" Rupert asked, holding the hand she gave him.

"I think so; it seems to me years since I first saw you."

"To me it seems only a few days," Van Hals said, and Daria knew she had not lost all her power over him.

"Your last letter from Rome did not prepare me for your return," she said, seating herself as she spoke, and indicating in her characteristic queenly way where her guest should place himself; "I had not heard of your father's death."

"You heard nothing, I suppose."

"Only that you were the happy father of a son," she said, looking furtively at Rupert.

"Fathers, to be happy, must be rich," Van Hals answered moodily.

Daria had been jealous of this son, as a link between his mother whom she hated and his father whom she loved, but this answer of Rupert's set her mind at ease.

"Always rich, my friend: money is the specter that haunts you, is it not?"

"One of the specters, Señora; there are many just now." And Van Hals rose and paced up and down the room.

It was the room in which he had made the model of Daria, with the doves on her breast. On a raised wooden structure the clay figure stood, but a curtain separated it from that part of the room in which the the two had been sitting. As Rupert walked past he pulled the curtain aside and looked at his work; then flung the tapestry from his hand with a groan. Daria drew near to him.

"You are troubled," she said, in a voice like the

softest music ; men who had withstood the charm of her beauty had been won by the fascination of her voice. "It is hard to lose a father."

"My father!" Van Hals cried, as if the pent-up passion in him could no longer be held back ; "my father did me the worst wrong one man can do another. He killed my faith in goodness. I can see myself now, a happy boy full of ardor,—a boy's ardor for some brave deed,—and I can see my father's smile, the cynic's smile that kills like acid dropped on life. Behind the sunny face of each good deed my father saw the bare skull of a bad motive—and taught me to see it ; so that now I can see nothing else, self-interest rules the world, and there is no good."

"Your wife?" Daria whispered.

"Yes," Van Hals said, with a harsh laugh ; "there is woman's goodness, cotton-wool virtue, innocence fenced about from trial—God forgive me ! I ought not to disparage it, for it is far above my reach, but I should like to have known one good, strong man, brave to speak truth, if he died for it. I should have been a better man myself for the knowledge."

"What has your father done?"

"Do you not know. Have you not heard we are beggars? I have given orders that my father's property shall be sold to pay his debts ; and the money I borrowed, believing myself heir to great wealth, must hang round my neck like a stone. And all these years not a word of warning, only extravagance which lulled me into a false security ; and now and then a vague but studied phrase which duped me. You look at me with surprise, but you do not know what

it is to awake to find all your hopes shattered at one blow, and to see you have been a fool!"

Did she not know it? and was not he who had taught her the hard lesson there?

"I look at you," she said, leaning back with assumed indifference, "because you are a splendid study; a ruffled lake is beautiful, but I like to watch a storm on an ocean. You pace the room as though you were in some desperate case, but after all, what does it mean? A little longer waiting, that is all."

"No, no!" Van Hals said, stopping short in his restless pacing; "I must give it up. I will go to England. This place would be a place of torture to me if I must sink to the level of men I have despised. I cannot fight any longer; I am spent."

"And your wife?" again Daria asked.

"Poor child! it will cost her nothing—she is not ambitious. For her to clasp her child in her arms, and to be with me, is all she asks. Riches are no temptation to her—it will be no self-denial to her to be a poor man's wife; and she will not know—women do not know," the disappointed man ended, with a groan.

And the Jewess sat beside him, her dark eyes burning with a new fire, her set face as pale as ivory. In the weeks that had passed during which Van Hals had been daily at her house, alone with her for hours in the studio, a certain amount of confidence had naturally grown between the two; but his wife had hitherto been sacred; no comment had touched her, her name had seldom crossed Rupert's lips. To Daria this first mention of Myrtle as opposed, however slightly, to himself, was a triumph.

"Surely you are wrong," she ventured to say softly, "even if she has no pride in your fame—and possibly, being English, it may be so ; yet she must feel all you lose if you give up art. Why, friend, think ; you could not bear it. Think what it means!" And as she spoke she rose and drew back the curtain from the statue of herself, and stood beside it like a prophetess. "Will you let others take your place, do your work, wear your crown ? Will you let them ask who that Van Hals was, who was talked of in Rome, and envied in Holland, and who gave up the race and fell back until he was lost to sight in the dust of the feet hurrying to pass him by,—because—because—you force me to put it into words—because he has married a wife who is content to sit with her lips on her infant's cheek, instead of urging him to a victory that must be his if he will fight for it."

Van Hals looked at her kindling face, and thought the flush on her brow was for his fame ; he did not know she was pleading for herself instead of for him.

"What would you have me do ?" he asked, yielding to her beauty and her persuasion.

"I would have you fling this debt which galls you behind your back, and never think of it ; I would have you bold to risk something for this fame which is your life. Could you live, do you think, in the hónest mediocrity you propose for yourself ? Could you toil at a desk from morning to night, content to take a scanty pittance to your wife and child—with no pleasure, no excitement, no society, but that you can find in your English home ? It is not in you, Rupert van Hals ! I challenge you to exist through the slavery of it ; but if you do, if you pay off the

debt, and satisfy your scruples, what then? Do you think the old fire will be there ready for art? Do you think you will start again, years later, with the old hope and the old ardor? Choose now, but if your choice is the safe path of humble independence, do not tell me, for I shall scorn you! Let your choice be reckless, the choice of a man to kindle a woman's pride, and I, Daria Leon, will be proud of you; is that nothing?" And the Spanish woman laid her hand on his. "Are you to be the one man in all the world to resist Leon's daughter, when she says: Be ambitious for my sake!"

"If Leon's daughter had said this a year ago, I would have won her and fame too, or I would have died."

As Van Hals spoke the words which told her how utterly for the moment he had forgotten Myrtle his wife, the Jewess drew her hand from his, and turned away her face lest he should read its triumph.

When he lifted his head from his hand, which had been pressed tightly over his eyes as Daria spoke, she was standing again by the model.

"Have you the block of marble ready?" she asked.

"It is at the studio; I did not think of retaining that."

"You must retain it. It is absurd to think of working at home. Patrons of art," she added with contempt, "do not like one to work in a garret. Did you not tell me some of the titled women you met in Rome are coming here to see about their commissions?"

"Yes."

"Well, do you not see? Did you lead them to ex-

pect rags and a bare floor, or silken hangings and a tesselated pavement? Seneca, I believe, wished that his friends should rather take notice of himself, than his house; but as men become insignificant, houses grow more imposing. Now, a man thinks much of his furniture, and desires that his guests shall think about it; and not only will, so to speak, hide himself behind his cabinets, but suffer himself to be appraised according to their value. You cannot be a Seneca yet, and until you are, women, and men too, will judge you by your surroundings. Above all things we moderns are realistic."

"I will be guided by you."

"Very well; keep your studio, or hire a better, as you will. Work at my statue. Tell me when your friends from Rome are here, and they shall have a banquet at my father's house, which shall enable you to double the price of their commissions. Now go, and send for this model, and begin your work. I am going to send you some tapestried hangings for your studio."

An hour later Van Hals was by his wife's side in Anton Secker's drawing room.

Myrtle was downstairs for the first time, and as she sat by the window, looking out at the cheerful street, and nodding now and then in response to the smile of some acquaintance passing by, Rupert thought she was strong enough to hear his plans for the future.

To Myrtle, it did not seem a hardship that the dreary farm at Drock was to be sold, and as she had never looked for riches from her father-in-law, she was prepared to hear that her husband was no gainer by his death. Just then, she could not quite realize what poverty meant; strong in her love for Rupert,

and for her child, no self-denial seemed hard to her, and she did not know that her worst trial would not lie in her own suffering, but in her husband's.

"Then shall we have nothing?" she asked, with that strange calm which came from a blending of her inexperience and her love.

"Worse than nothing—debts," her husband said, irritated by her indifference.

"Ah, not debts, Rupert," his wife cried, roused at last to the reality of the trouble. "Whatever we do, let us keep our independence. You will earn something; I must work too, and we will take a small house, perhaps only a few rooms, and live just from day to day, as our money comes."

"And you call that living!" Van Hals said, with an impatient gesture. "Poor girl! would you be content with that?"

"I would be content with you—and the child," Myrtle said, stroking with trembling fingers the Dutch bundle that lay across her knees.

"Then let me tell you, Myrtle, that though I love you, I could not be content. It burns in my brain night and day that I have married you and brought you to this—that my father knew how all would end, and never held a finger up to stay me, because he must have come down from his pedestal and let his son see his weakness."

Poor Myrtle! She was not sanguine about the realization of Rupert's dream of fame, and Van Hals contrasted her prudence with Daria's ardor, and determined that his wife could not understand the aspirations of genius. On one point she was firm, their home must be in accordance with what they could

afford, and the studio alone should borrow ; and close to the Jews' quarter, where rents were lower, she found a little narrow house with four rooms in it ; two of these were rented by a professor and his wife, the two on the ground floor were at liberty, and these Myrtle took. A dank, seldom-used canal passed the door, the street was little frequented and dirty. Here they spent the autumn and part of the winter, Rupert and Myrtle and the child.

Rupert sold a few little tazzas and vases and children's figures ; and Myrtle, through Dr. Isencraw, got some copying to do, and they managed to live, and that was all. At times, after some success, Rupert came home in wild spirits, and bade Myrtle spend the money he gave her lavishly ; at other times, and these were more frequent than the first, he came with bitter speech and dejected mien, saying such hard things that Myrtle learned to keep the child out of its father's sight, because her mother's heart could not bear to hear him mutter that they were better without it. To Van Hals these dreary months were well-nigh unbearable. His life in Rome, full of reckless luxury and enjoyment, had been the worst possible preparation for the contrast which was to follow it. The two bare rooms which Myrtle called their home grew more and more distasteful to him, and gradually he drifted back into his old bachelor life, went whereever he was asked, and especially to Leon's house, and even once or twice gave a supper himself.

Once, after some days when there had been little in the house but hope, Van Hals came home in high spirits, and told Myrtle he had sold a statuette for about five pounds.

His wife threw herself on his breast with a tearful cry: "Oh, Rupert, thank God! and please will you give me something to pay——"

"My dear, I have spent it," her husband said innocently.

"Spent it! it was not ours to spend—we owed it, Rupert."

"Why, what can it matter? in a few days we may have five times as much. Would you have me turn away from my friends who came to congratulate me? A dozen art students, and two or three men who have promised to speak favorably of me in the newspapers, were there, and I gave them a supper, for old fellowship. Would you have me turn monk?"

"I would be too proud to spend money which did not belong to me," Myrtle said unwisely. Rupert's wife was not always meek.

"Too proud! You English have strange notions; you may well be called a nation of shopkeepers. You may owe a man any duty under the sun and manage to evade it, without comment; but owe money, and the whole virtuous scorn of the wealthy race is poured upon you."

Myrtle said nothing; she had learned before this that English ideas and Rupert's clashed.

She went upstairs, and asked the professor's wife for a little bread and milk for the child's breakfast,—the professor was a teacher of shorthand and he and his wife knew what it was to borrow food from Myrtle, so she had few scruples,—then she went supperless to bed.

CHAPTER XX.

"'TWERE long to tell and sad to trace,
Each step from splendor to disgrace;"

and just because of its length and its sadness the tale comes to be seldom told. So we speak of men falling into misfortune, as if the earth suddenly opened before them, when as a rule they walk into it, blindfold it may be, but still step by step. At first when they leave the safe highway there are signs marked Dangerous to warn them, but for the most part they treat these as though placed there by cowards who are afraid to try a new path, and jealous of those who venture on it; and after a time the sign-posts are few and far between, and they forget that they ever saw a warning. After this the end is sure. How, and when, and into what morass of trouble or despair or crime the man will fall, simply depends on what quagmire may be nearest him in the moment of supreme temptation.

When Van Hals was in Rome, an old friend was speaking one day of the curious touching of contrasted lives, and instanced the contact of those of Rupert and Krantz, whom he called his moral antipodes. Van Hals paused, chisel in hand, and turned from the statue at which he was working, smiling at the contrast between himself, the rising sculptor, and Jan Krantz, the down-trodden, drunken, despairing Jew.

"We have human nature in common," he said loftily.

But given the common human nature, and all other community is possible. When Van Hals spoke he

little thought that one day he and Krantz would be united in a yet closer brotherhood, and, yielding to one temptation, would share one crime.

Before they met, however, Myrtle made the acquaintance of the Krantz household.

It was *Kermesse* time, the mid-winter fair, and a sunny day, though many of the smaller canals were frozen.

Myrtle took her boy out in the middle of the day, and stood with him on her arm that he might enjoy the brightness. The mother and child were sheltered by a high wall, and as the air was very still the sun made all his power felt. The boy shouted with joy at the scene, as they stood in the midst of the fair, and even Myrtle was roused to interest.

The peasant women from all parts of Holland were there, with their white caps touched with color, and glittering with brass, or gold, or silver ornaments. The stalls were decked with curious toys and glass cups, and close by was one on which hard boiled eggs and pickles were spread in curious combination. Dogs pulled small carts of vegetables, bundles of dried sage, live fish, or fish with the head and tail tied together with fine string to mimic life, and bread and cakes of quaint shapes. On the half-frozen water near, a black barge was moored, and on its deck, in shining contrast, a bright copper kettle of enormous size, shaped like an urn, caught the rays of the winter sun.

As the two stood there against the sunny wall, a man, passing, turned to look at them. Myrtle's gaze was fixed on some distant object, but it was evident she did not see it, for her eyes were full of tears. The

child had pulled some short locks of her soft fair hair on her shoulders; she held him high on her right arm, her strong beautiful hands clasping him firmly, and the man who looked at her remembered that her husband had once said she was like Holbein's Madonna; the likeness was clearer than ever now, and all the clearer for the sorrow in the face. She did not see that anyone looked at her, and Dr. Isencraw, for it was he, dared not trust himself to speak just then, his heart was so full of indignation against the man who could wear so fair a jewel carelessly. As he passed on, Esther the Jewess followed him, and turning to look where he was looking, saw Myrtle and the child. She drew near, attracted by a beauty all the lovelier for its sorrowfulness, and Myrtle's child gave a little joyous cry. Esther held upon her open palm, shoulder-high, a tray of children's playthings, which she was selling at the fair; the boy caught one in his baby fingers, and dropped it on the stones, where it lay broken to pieces. His mother set him down, and her fair face grew crimsom.

"I am very sorry," she said, looking with appealing eyes at the Jewess; "he has broken it, and I cannot buy it from you. I have no money."

Esther was sorry too; money was no trifle in Kranz's home.

"I will come back with you," she said. "Do you live far from here?"

"It is no use; there is no money at home," Rupert's wife answered mechanically. "See, my scarf is worth something, will you take it, and forgive me?"

She took a little knitted scarf from her neck, and gave it to Esther.

"No, no!" the Jewess cried, pushing it away. "I was wrong to press you, I might have seen you were poor; and now you will think it is true that we Jews care only for money. I hate myself for asking you. Don't let me see the scarf!" And as Myrtle still held it toward her, she turned quickly, and ran in among the crowd.

Myrtle took the child home. Something in the face of the Jewess made her wish to see the girl again, but she did not know where to find her, until one Sunday a sudden longing for something English came over Myrtle, and leaving her boy with the wife of the teacher of shorthand, she started to go to the English church.

Her way led through the Jews' quarter, and as she passed an open doorway she saw the Jewess she had met at the fair.

"Will you come in? Are you alone?" Esther asked. She did not like to say: Where is your husband? for her life had shown her many forsaken wives, and she did not doubt that the stranger now in her poor room was one of them.

"My husband was not able to be with me to-day," Myrtle said, and the Jewess, "sadly wise," knew as well as if the fact had been put into words that the trouble in the stranger's face came from her husband.

"See," she said, lifting a coverlet from a sleeping child's face, "this is my sister's child. Poor little thing, she is not strong, and her mother is dead. Sometimes I wonder why the angels let her live on, but she is all that holds her father straight, and I fancy that is what keeps her out of paradise. Her father,—poor fellow,—well, he drinks sometimes." The Jewess

sighed, and looked wistfully at her visitor. "I wonder if you would do something to help me," she said.

"Oh, please let me do that! you have been good to me; and I do not know why, but I feel as if we were meant to help one another."

"That's what I felt the day I saw you with your child," Esther said. "Well, it is only this, to wait by the little one while I go and meet Jan."

"Yes, I will do it. What is your name?"

"Esther. They call me Kranz here, and Kranz's Esther, but I have another name; only I do not want the Jews about here to know it. It is a name that has seen better days, and my father, who was proud of it, is dead, and would not care to hear it in our neighbors' mouths."

She stood on a broken stool and looked out at the small window, by which means she could see the clock on a distant building.

"It is nearly twelve," she explained to Myrtle. "And my brother will be coming home, and I go to meet him when I can. He was not fit for work this morning, but he went to report himself and pay a fine for absence. You see yesterday was our Sabbath, and he does no work, and a holiday is bad for him. He drinks, and then on your Sunday his hand shakes, and he cannot guide the polishing wheel right. He would be turned away, only Leon the money-lender gave him the place, and he makes them excuse him. No Jews dare refuse Leon anything, and they are all Jews at the diamond works. You have heard of Leon, I suppose?"

"Yes. Is he not a hard man?"

"They say serving him is like serving the devil, but I don't know; he is kind to Jan, and keeps him from drink, and makes him report himself every week—only when the Sabbath comes he has nothing to do, and then the drink is too much for him."

Esther threw a shawl over her head and shoulders, and then she called a dog from his place at the feet of the sleeping child.

"Krebs, this is a friend; you must keep guard, Krebs, over her and Rachel. You will not be afraid of him; he will not hurt you, and I dare not take him with me."

"No," Myrtle said, patting the bony head, "I like dogs; but why cannot you take him?"

"Jan would know me then," Esther answered, with downcast eyes. "Krebs would bark and jump at his hand, and he would know who I was."

"Do you not let him see you?"

"Let him see me? Never! I should have to break with him then. He'd despise me for caring for him drunk, and despise himself too, if he knew how bad he was. I never touch him till he's half-blind; then I guide him by his arm, but he does not know I'm there, and when he gets here, I open the door and he half falls in; then Krebs licks him and he knows he is safe."

It was a terrible picture, and Myrtle trembled at the prospect before her.

"Can I get out of the way?" she asked.

"You must look from the window when you hear footsteps, then open the door and slip up the passage, and wait there till you see us come. Don't move; he won't speak to you; he goes where I push him, and,

poor fellow, he thinks it is his dead wife who leads him home."

All happened as Esther said. The white dog took his place again on the child's feet, and Myrtle sat waiting, a little afraid that every shuffling footstep was the one she dreaded, and pondering much that this woman could give her life for the comfort of a drunken man, and his helpless, almost mindless, child. For the child awoke and looked at her, with no wonder, only a blank feeble stare, and with less intelligence in its eyes than in those of the dog at its feet. Suddenly Myrtle remembered why the name of Kranz seemed familiar to her; it was that of the substitute of whom she had heard both Rupert and his father speak. She bowed her head on her hand and puzzled her brain over the old question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" and could find no answer.

She had almost forgotten where she was, when Krebs started up with a shrill welcoming bark, and Myrtle heard the footstep she dreaded. There was no mistaking the unlifted, tottering, drunken feet, and she opened the door and ran, as Esther had bidden, up the narrow passage beyond the room's entrance. Then Kranz came in, feeling at the wall, with Esther behind him, guiding him unseen, her face dyed with his shame. He stumbled over the threshold, there was a double cry of welcome from the child and from the dog, and Myrtle waited no longer but hurried out into the street. Esther walked through the Jews' quarter with her, and Myrtle pointed out her house and made her promise to come and see her.

"Her life is harder than mine," Myrtle said to herself; "I need not despair."

She did not tell Rupert of her meeting with Kranz, because she knew he would forbid her to go to the house, and for some unexplainable, instinctive reason she felt she could not give up Esther.

Van Hals was in one of his exultant, hopeful moods just then, and for some weeks onward. His statue of Leon's daughter drew near completion. It was to be exhibited first in Amsterdam, and possibly sent to Paris afterward. He had also finished one or two small commissions, and the money received for these was very welcome to the little household. Myrtle began to hope again, and wrote home oftener; she could not write more cheerfully—for Harvey's only test of her happiness lay, not in the brightness, for that never failed, but in the frequency of her letters. Nothing more had been said about Mrs. Prosser coming to Amsterdam; Myrtle could not ask her mother to come and see her poverty, and she flattered herself that the two loved ones at Red Hill Farm did not note the omission. She little knew that Harvey not only noted it, but guessed well the reason for it, and kept his mother unsuspicious with tender ingenuity worthy of a woman.

Meanwhile Myrtle and Esther often met, and the Jewess was delighted to see her friend more cheerful. Esther's nature was very buoyant; she never brooded over trouble, and took each simple pleasure that lay in her path with an eagerness which Myrtle's English gravity seldom attained to.

One day she ran hurriedly into the dreary little house where the Van Hals family lived, her black eyes sparkling with childish delight.

"Put on your bonnet," she cried to Myrtle, "and

come with me. Jan can show us something about diamond-cutting. He is a good workman, and the foreman of his room favors him ; he can get us in at noon for a few minutes. You said you would like to see."

"Yes," hesitated Myrtle, with that disinclination to a sudden plan which comes from being long unused to pleasure, "but I am not ready—and then the child."

"I'll take the child," said the voice of the "professor's" wife at the door. "You make her go, Esther ; she has little enough change, Heaven knows."

So the two kindly women forced Myrtle away, and she and Esther were at a little door indicated by Kranz just before noon.

"Most of the men are away at their dinner," Jan said, meeting them. "Come this way and I'll show you what diamonds are like."

The women followed him through dusty passages, until they came to a long, low workroom, with dirty windows and a blackened ceiling. The overseer or foreman was coming out as they entered. He spoke to Kranz for a moment, but let them pass.

The Jew sat in his place, at what looked to Myrtle like an old desk, to which was attached the machinery for cutting the diamonds. Kranz pulled open a drawer, and took up a few insignificant looking stones in his hand, laying them on his black open palm. Even contrasted with the dirt they did not look brilliant, and Esther was much disappointed.

"Are those diamonds?" she asked contemptuously.

"Yes, these are diamonds ; they will shine when I cut them, but they look poor things enough ; and yet each spark holds a poor man's dinner for many days."

"Are they counted when they are given out to the men?" asked Myrtle, who was struck with the apparent carelessness of trusting diamonds in an open drawer.

"They are weighed or regulated in some way, I believe," Jan said, with a cunning look. "They always tell us they could detect a theft at once, but I doubt it; at all events not a small theft," he continued, letting the small stones trinkle gently from side to side of his hand and nestle between his fingers. "The diamonds lose something in the cutting, and though the masters say they can allow for that, I doubt it." He put the stones into the drawer again, and shut it, and just then the foreman came back.

"Of course, poor fellows like us are not trusted with the best stones," Jan said, turning to Myrtle; "I cannot even show you those, though there are some in this room."

At this moment a door at the further end of the long workshop opened, and with a sound of merry talking and laughter three or four persons entered.

"Keep back there," said the foreman," they will not note you," and he hastened forward to meet the newcomers.

"It is the manager showing some grandees over the works," Jan said, in a low tone. "This place is one of the curiosities of the town."

The little party came forward slowly.

First a black-eyed, dark-skinned man with a heavy scowling face, and an air as if the world belonged to him; by his side, or a little behind him, walked the manager, bending his broad Dutch body obsequiously, and gesticulating wildly.

"That is Leon, my patron," said Jan, below his breath, and Myrtle leaned forward a little to look at the Jew of whom she had heard Rupert speak.

She looked, and her cheek paled and then flushed crimson; for just behind Leon walked a beautiful Spanish woman, on whose face was a proud smile as she listened to the almost whispered words of a man by her side, and that man was Rupert.

Until that moment Myrtle had not been jealous, and even now she was not afraid she would lose Rupert's love, but she felt keenly that she was not all to him; that without this other woman's praise life would be little to her husband.

They passed by, looking at nothing in the room; the manager had shown his choice diamonds elsewhere, and this was simply their way out.

As they drew near, Leon, whose keen eyes let nothing escape, glanced at Kranz, and Van Hals involuntarily followed the direction of the Jew's look with his own.

The eyes of husband and wife met, and Rupert, with a red spot on his cheek and a strange imploring petition in his eyes, shook his head almost imperceptibly.

Myrtle understood. She made no step forward, no sign of recognition, but her husband feared she might. He was ashamed of her. She sank back on a wooden stool that stood by the wall, longing to hide herself from the possible gaze of the proud woman for whose sake Rupert had been afraid to own his wife. For a moment she felt nothing but a tight pain at her heart, then there was a rushing sound in her ears, the swing-door of the workroom closed with a shock, and she heard Esther's voice speaking to Jan.

"Why, that is the beautiful Jewess," Esther said breathlessly; "I have heard of her from the ladies where I work; I would rather have seen her than the diamonds. Daria Leon! She is beautiful. I do not wonder that she turns men's heads. Oh, and the man with her must be the sculptor they say she loves; he is handsome and like what I have heard described. Poor thing, she loves him, and she would have married him, they say, but one day she found he had a wife. I wonder if he loves that wife; she has kept him from——"

"Fool!" cried Jan, striking his hand against Esther's mouth, "what have you done? That man is Van Hals, and his wife is here."

His wife was there, just behind them, stiff and fainting, propped against the wall.

"You never stopped me, Jan; oh, why did you not stop me?" sobbed Esther, chafing Myrtle's hands.

"I never listened, girl—I've other things to think of but your chatter; it was her face made me remember."

The tramp of the returning workmen roused Myrtle. She stood on her feet, clinging to Esther's arm.

"Thank you," she said, turning to Kranz, as one would thank a surgeon, after some bitter pain, which yet is no fault of his; "I am glad—glad that I saw the diamonds."

"You did not hear——" Kranz asked, deceived by her calmness.

"I heard the door bang," Myrtle said, and as she spoke Esther shrank from the unconscious pressure

of the English woman's hand on her arm. "I have been weak lately, and the close room affected me. I am sorry if I missed anything you said."

"No, no," said Kranz; "I am glad you did not hear Esther's talk; she chatters enough to make one's head ache, and you are weak, as you say."

But if Kranz was deceived, so was not Esther. The two women walked home almost in silence, Myrtle betraying no trace of weakness, except that her feet tottered if she left Esther's arm.

As they neared the desolate house, henceforth to seem so much more desolate, Myrtle felt the warm tears of the Jewess on her hand.

"Don't fret, Esther," she said gently; "it was not your fault, dear. You know my trouble now, and you will never tell."

CHAPTER XXI.

"AND yet you admire the French?" Leon said carelessly, as he sat alone with his daughter at the dinner-table.

"As a nation, yes; a Frenchman, taken alone, wearies me;" and Daria rose from table as she spoke, and, throwing a lace mantilla round her shoulders, prepared to leave the room.

"Stay! I wish to speak to you," said Leon.

Daria stayed, as if what she did were indifferent, and played with the fruit on her plate.

"It is like the French army," she went on, pursuing the subject; "as a whole it is magnificent; but its individual soldiers are somewhat puny."

"You once thought much of the old noblesse."

"Yes."

"Why do you hesitate?"

"I am calculating. It is long since the Parisians have had a revolution; I do not think there has been an *emeute* for a year. By all rules of statistics, and laws of probability, a revolution is due. Then, good-by to the old noblesse; it is all a matter of calculation, like fires in theaters. I read the other day that in London a theater must be burned before the year is out. These things interest me."

"And they do not interest me," Leon said angrily. "Do you know the letter of the Marquis de —— waits an answer?"

"My father," Daria said, laughing, "as the marquis wrote to you, I presume he looks to you for a reply."

"What must I say?"

"What you will; that your daughter does not at present wish to marry. When she does she will graciously signify her pleasure, and pass candidates in review."

"Bah! no fooling with me, Daria. A year ago —was it a year? perhaps more—I asked you this question, and you gave the same answer. There was a reason for your reply—a reason for which I pitied you, but which I accepted for your sake. That reason no longer exists."

Daria still faced her father eye to eye, but her olive cheek deepened in color, and her mouth changed.

"He whom you love is a married man, Daria; worse than this, he was married when he sought you —or you sought him, which was it? He flung your

love aside, and I thought you had paid scorn with scorn. Instead of that what do I hear?" And the Jew came near to his daughter and laid his hand heavily on hers as it rested on the table. "That Leon's child is pining for a love that can never be hers, unless, as they said at the clubs last week, she is waiting until his neglect has killed his wife, to become in her turn the slave of a selfish fool."

"Who dares say that?"

"Dares, do you ask? Anyone, everyone; men who have sat at my table, have lounged in your salon; men whom you have disdained, Daria. Thing are changed, daughter. I looked into your room on Sunday—who was there? Half a dozen men, where there had been twenty, and no women. And in place of the gay laugh, the sparkling talk that told your father where to seek for his child in the crowd, a silence; where, with crimson cheeks and downcast eyes, the proud Daria Leon, no longer proud, listened to Rupert van Hals, who is only half a man, and whom I can sweep from his place as I sweep a fly from the wall."

Daria did not answer, but her eyes had left her father's face, and were gazing, wide and dilated, as though at a picture in the air. She was looking at herself through another's glass, and such a view is commonly humbling.

"If you were married," her father continued, his harsh features softened by his care for the daughter he loved, "it would matter less. I love you second only to your mother's memory; but before any woman's love I put the honor of my name. Give yourself to a husband and you are his care; now, a Leon, in your father's house, you must guard your

own honor, or, by the God of my fathers, I must guard it for you, Daria!"

"What would you have me do?" she asked, with a strange humility.

"Take this man's offer, be a marquise of France, have a coronet on your carriages, and princes at your hôtel, and let all Paris talk of your beauty."

The Jewess sighed wearily.

"This does not tempt at my age, father. Women are older than I before they marry for an establishment. Besides, what is all this to a Leon? You spoke of your family name, and now you argue as if we were parvenus paying for a title with gold."

"To me the house of Leon is noble, Daria, but to this marquis the bluest of Spanish blood is nothing—if it flows in Jewish veins. Ally yourself to the noblesse of France, and forget that you are a Jewess, daughter!"

"Are you ashamed of our race, father? that is not like you!"

"Not ashamed; but writhing under the contemptuous heel of Christendom that treads us down!" Leon cried, for a moment turned from his purpose by his daughter's question.

"Have you ever thought, Daria," he asked, with his gaze on her troubled face, "what we should be without our money? Suppose that, instead of negotiating loans for crowned heads, I lent poor clerks small sums that they might bet on horses they had never seen; suppose that you were a painter's model, or a girl selling flowers in the street, do you think that the scorn which touches the whole Jewish nation would pass you by?"

"And yet, my father, you must give me more time," Daria said, evading other answer; "I cannot marry this marquis."

"Then you will go to Spain!" the Jew exclaimed, with a threatening glance.

"You send me away like a naughty child," Daria answered, forcing a smile. "Very well, I will go to Spain. When shall we start?"

"You will go alone. I have business keeping me here." He rose, as he spoke, and paced the full length of the spacious room three or four times, silently. Daria again made as if she would leave him, but he beckoned to her solemnly, and the father and daughter sat in two deep chairs by the fire.

"I will trust you," Leon began. "Where this man has not bewitched you, you are to be trusted. I have news of one of the lost diamonds."

"How?"

"By private information. One of the set is now in the largest diamond factory in Amsterdam."

"Was that why you asked me to visit it the other day?"

"Partly; I had inquiries to make, which were natural and free from suspicion if I had friends with me who wished to see the works. But I failed to get a sight of the stone."

"Are you sure it is yours?" Daria asked.

"Certain; I have my information from one whom I myself have trained in the art of discriminating between various kinds of diamonds. He cannot be mistaken."

"But, father," persisted his daughter, "how does your diamond come to be sent there? I thought only rough stones were sent to be cut."

"This *is* a rough stone," Leon said; "at least it is not fully cut. My diamonds came from an Indian source, and the Indians do not cut their stones. The object of cutting it now, is that it is less likely to be recognized, and its present owner is determined not to give it up."

"Have you offered to buy it, my father?" Daria had begun to share some of her father's superstition about this string of jewels—she felt as though she would not be happy until they were again in Leon's house.

"Understand, Daria. I cannot go and say to the diamond-cutters: 'You have my stone,' because I should betray my agent; and though I would sacrifice the man without scruple if it paid, I respect his confidence simply because betraying him does not pay. This has always been my rule—absolute faith with my spies; by this means I have absolute command over them. Therefore I go to the manager and tell him one of my stones has been traced to Amsterdam; it may come into his hands, in which case I will pay any sum he likes to ask for it—any sum, Daria, any sum in the power of Leon the usurer, and he takes time to think, and then declines."

"Declines?"

"Yes. When I say he takes time to think, I mean to consult his client. The man who possesses the diamond declines to let it go. What do you argue from that?"

"I do not know."

"That he knows its value as a talisman, a charm, a bringer of good fortune; that he is rich, and regards the lucky diamond as better than money, and

that therefore I shall not be able to buy it from him."

"But, stay, father! it is yours; it has been stolen; you can claim it," cried Daria eagerly.

"How? I know it is at the diamond factory; I am not at liberty, that is, I do not choose, to say how I know it. How can I claim a stone when I cannot *prove* it is there, or prosecute its possessor for holding stolen property, when I do not know his name?"

"Threaten the manager."

"And let the diamond escape!" said the Jew, with a sound that counterfeited a laugh. "The manager would give the stone back to his client, and the man would vanish with it—they cut diamonds in other cities besides Amsterdam. Do you not see, there is profit to be made out of it if it is left with its possessor, but if I prove it mine it must be given up without remuneration? and therefore they will take care that I do not prove it mine."

"Then we must let it go," said Daria.

"No, daughter; Leon will never let it go, and fate, which has been long against him, works with him at last. When you come back from Spain the diamond will be in my hand; the link of forty-two—not seven sevens, but still containing a seven—will be complete, and my child will be happy."

His daughter shook her head.

"Daria, you know the cabala?" and over Leon's face came a look of cunning, mixed, it almost seemed, with a contempt for his own credulity, and he took from his pocket-book some scraps of paper and held them in the lamplight.

Daria glanced at him with some impatience. "You tried to explain it to me once," she said, "but I could not understand."

"It is a process whereby you determine your fatal year," Leon said hurriedly; "good or evil fate, I mean. It is wonderful sometimes. See, I write the date of my birth, take the sum of the figures contained in it, and add them to the date, and it gives me the year my father died; repeat the process, the year of my marriage. Now mark, child! I have worked it through my life, each date indicated has been eventful for good or bad fortune. Here in the future," and he pointed to a date in the calculations, ten years later, "lies probably the year of my death."

"It is terrible," Daria said, "if it were not absurd."

"The most remarkable thing is this," her father continued, studying with rapt attention the papers in his hand; "a week ago a thought struck me, I would try the cabala for you."

Daria drew nearer. She thought she would hear this fate, as young girls try charms, not believing in them, and yet anxious for a happy answer to their half-laughing, half-timid question.

"There is nothing to be noticed in the dates,—they are not many, your life has not been long yet, Daria, —until"—and Leon drew his finger under one set of figures—"this year—note, it is the year we have begun,—fateful to you, and—turn to my papers,—fateful to me also. This almost unexampled coincidence, Daria, is no accident; this year father and daughter are involved in one fate. When I saw this in black and white, daughter, I trembled. Good or bad, I asked myself; good or bad? And as I pon-

dered, news was brought me of my lost diamond, the gem that had lain on your mother's neck, and then I knew—the year's fate is *good*, for us both, Daria."

The Jewess looked at her father, with a new gravity in her dark eyes.

"It may be that what is good to you is not good to me, my father; what becomes of the omen then?"

Leon pushed away the hand that rested on his knee, and put the papers back in his pocketbook, then he sighed heavily.

"You are changed, Daria, changed, changed. Once you had one aim, one ambition, country, faith, thought, with your father; once I had but to tell my sorrow to feel your sympathy; my anger flushed your cheek; my pride was reflected in your eyes. Now—I am alone again, lonely as when I held my infant daughter in my arms, and knew that I should be a solitary man all my life if she failed me. She has failed me, Daria; she can hear that our lives are linked for good, and can question in doubt whether her father's meat may not be her poison. Do you not know yet, that the only joy I look for shines from your face to mine? I have had no light for more than a year, Daria; there is a shadow falling across your eyes, and mine are in darkness; but I know whose figure casts the shadow, and I will hurl it from its place if it cost me my life—and yours!"

Leon, with the tendency of his race to poetic imagery, was apt to speak thus when he was strongly moved, and his daughter listened in silence, but with a longing in her heart that she could be once more the child he had described. She felt as if she were drifting away from him against her will; as if she were

losing her likeness to her old self, and yet would rather be that old self; she knew she was weak, but disdained her weakness. Leon left her alone, and as she watched him go from the room she would have given her life to have had the power to say: "No man shall scorn me, least of all you, my father. Forbid this man our house, and take me where you will." But she could not. She took a lamp in her hand, and went into the deserted drawing room, seldom used in winter, where she had sat with Van Hals and offered him her love.

She stood where she had stood that night, and, with that craving for an outward sign to help the memory and imagination which many feel in moments of prostrate energy, she even raised her hand in the empty air, as she had raised it when she would have given Rupert the flower which was to signify so much. It was no use, the scorn she had felt that evening would not come back to help her, the pride which had been her strength was gone, and she was weaker than she had feared. With a stifled cry she knelt and kissed the place where Rupert had stood, and laid her head upon her arms as if she were weeping over a grave.

"I love you, love you, love you, Rupert!" she murmured. "Here where you cast me off I cannot hate you—cannot, though I would; I can only love you."

She fancied she heard footsteps, and put the light out, but remained where she was. There, in the dark, she crouched, gathering her rich dress round her, for she was cold, and thought of Van Hals. He was not to blame for her misery, she would not have him blamed; he would have married her if he

had dared to hope, but she held him aloof, and while her poor pride kept him from her, another woman won him. No wonder her pride was dead, she thought, for it had slain her happiness; perhaps, some day, if this magic diamond came back to them, and she was happy again, she might again be proud. But alas, her father's idea of good fortune was success in revenge—revenge on Rupert whom she loved. She started to her feet and clenched her hands in the darkness.

"Not on him, it must not be on him,"—her lips spoke the words low in the silent room,—"only on the the wife. Ah, if these signs are true, or came true just for once, as dreams do—if happiness is for me this year, if the foolish, feeble, English wife were to die——"

She stopped, trembling from head to foot, and groping her way to the doorway, pulled aside the silken hangings and let in a faint glimmer from a distant lamp.

"Well, and what then?" she asked below her breath, turning her eyes to the darkness as if she addressed some tempting evil presence. "Would I be so poor a thing as to go to him if he called? Oh, father, you were right, and I am changed."

She dropped her hands by her sides, and wearily went up to her room.

Meanwhile, Leon was seated in his private office, with his chief clerk before him.

He usually went back the last thing at night, in case he might be required, and the Jew whom he trusted in all business matters lived over that part of the house given up to offices, and was ready at the summons of a bell.

Leon was disappointed by his interview with Daria. A year ago she had only opposed his plan of vengeance on Van Hals as being poor and incomplete; now her father knew well that no plan he could propose would have her sanction. He thought he had been foolish to trust her; she was but a woman, after all, and he had allowed her to see the man who fascinated her when she would. He might have foreseen the result; he was punished for imagining his daughter less weak than her fellows. Now he, her father, must act; the man must be swept from her path, must be heard of no more, and then Daria would listen to reason.

Having decided this, the Jew rang his bell, and his chief clerk appeared.

"How much have we lent to Mr. van Hals?" Leon asked.

The clerk went into the adjoining room, and immediately returned and named a sum larger than even Leon had imagined.

"So! He spends freely."

"In Rome he spent very freely. Occasionally, as it was your wish that he should be encouraged in extravagance, I sent him more money than he asked for; it went the way of the rest."

Between Leon and this clerk there was never any disguise of motives and objects; hence their conversation had a frankness which would frequently have surprised listeners.

"Well, that is good. Now, Simon, you will draw in. In a fortnight claim the debt."

"In your name, sir?"

"No; arrange matters carefully, place the bills in sure hands, with men who cannot wait for their

money. If he protests, regret that a mistake has arisen; that we have no present transactions with the man into whose hands the matter has fallen. You may even, judiciously—but very judiciously—offer another loan to enable him to pay off the debt. But, you understand, Simon, this offer he must not accept, it is only to save appearances. If he asks to see me, I am particularly engaged."

"It means ruin, I suppose, sir?" asked Simon, simply for his own information; he had no interest in Rupert.

The Jew was turning over some papers on the table.

"Yes, it means ruin," he said carelessly.

But Simon did not leave his master. He walked round and tried two or three safes as if to assure himself of their security. He fastened a bar against a darkened window that looked into the outer office. Leon knew that he had more to say, and after a time, pushing his letters away from him, he turned a keen eye on the clerk.

"Well?"

"And the Señora Daria?" Simon asked, a little nervously.

"The Señora Daria will be in Spain."

Without the flicker of an eyelid, or any comment in words, Simon hoped his patron might sleep well, and left the room. Then with his own hands Leon locked and barred the door by which the clerk had gone out, and came back to his chair.

"Even Simon," he said, "even Simon. He feared that Daria Leon would stoop to pay the debt to baulk her father's revenge, and spare her lover. And he was right."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE studio had been besieged all day by a crowd of admirers, interspersed by not a few flatterers who did not admire, and the fortunate sculptor was well-nigh surfeited with sweets.

For the statue of the Jew's daughter was finished, and would soon be exhibited where all Amsterdam might see it; but to-day Rupert's cards of invitation had drawn much of the fashionable world to his studio for the privilege of a private view.

It cannot be supposed that Van Hals was a humble man, but when he had listened to the day's indiscriminate praises he was nearer humility than he had been for many months, for at least he knew enough of what sculpture ought to be not to tremble as faults were shown in strong relief by a background of ignorant laudation.

It was over; the shallow, careless, transient crowd had passed out amid laughter and congratulations, and innuendoes—for was he not the one fortunate artist who had been allowed the privilege of sittings from the beautiful Jewess? Daria herself had not been there all day, though Van Hals expected her, and listened for the clank of her horses champing their bits, while with forced politeness he bowed in response to some compliment on his work.

One man remained; the young Italian, a rival in his art, whose rivalry Daria had used more than once to spur Rupert to renewed effort, which practically meant fresh extravagance.

Van Hals threw himself into an easy-chair,

and lighted a cigar. His friend walked round the studio.

"Where did you get these doves?" the Italian asked, after a leisurely inspection of the statue. "The plumage is very real."

Van Hals did not like the word "real," and answered, without turning his head:

"I modeled them in England."

"Have you the original clay?"

Rupert pointed with his cigar to a covered model in a corner of the room.

"Have I permission? Thank you," said the other, lifting the cover cautiously; it revealed the group of Myrtle with the doves.

Without a word, the Italian walked from this piece to the marble statue, and then back again, comparing the two.

"You have lost something," he said calmly.

"In Heaven's name tell me what, and leave me!" Rupert cried, with irritation in tone and manner; "you madden me walking up and down like a wild beast in the gardens."

"I do not know what," his rival said gravely, and in all seriousness; "I am trying to find out. The marble lacks what this has, but what that is I cannot see. Never mind, the public will not have this for comparison. Besides—you will pardon my saying so, but la bella Daria is not altogether an ideal for this subject. She caresses the birds—that is well; but the other protects them; they will come to no harm on her breast. It is a grand, pure face. Who is the woman?"

"My wife," said Van Hals shortly.

"I beg your pardon," the young critic said, bowing with Italian grace before the clay model of Myrtle; "but that accounts for it. You work *con amore* here, my friend. What a wife for a sculptor! You must want her to pose for you all day!" He stepped back, and looked again from one work to the other. "Yes, that is it; I see it now; you made a mistake, Van Hals. Daria should have held love-birds, finches, parrakeets, what you will—but not doves. Doves are for women like madame your wife—they typify purity and sorrow; the first is in the face already, the last may be to come. But again I apologize, I have spoken too freely; you must excuse me, I was carried away by my subject."

He picked his slouched hat from a chair, set it on his head with a careless grace, and, bowing, left Rupert alone.

His words rankled. You may give a man numbers of false coins until you confuse him so that he cannot tell if one rings true among them; but the moment he hears the genuine metal he doubts no longer that all the others were counterfeit. Van Hals had heard his work freely criticised all day, and had hardly known which opinion to value and which to reject, but when the Italian spoke he knew that what he had heard before was worthless.

Rupert turned and looked once more at the statue that was to make him famous; as he did so the model of his wife caught his eye, and he rose and covered it again, and came back to his seat. The thin blue smoke of his cigar curled up and up, and he followed it with his eyes and pondered.

He thought of the Italian's admiration of Myrtle;

he had spoken of her as serving as perpetual model for her husband.

Instead of that, Van Hals thought, puffing heavier clouds of smoke from his lips, instead of that she was a burden. But for her, or rather for his marriage, he might now be sharing untold wealth, leaning back in a sumptuous carriage beside a beautiful wife, visiting foreign cities in her company, enjoying every luxury he could desire.

It is not women only who sell themselves for position.

Rupert let his thoughts roam on—envious, discontented, unfaithful thoughts—until he paused a moment. What of his work? Well, his work might suffer, though he doubted that in his present mood; but if it did suffer, he would let it go; he need not work for money then, and fame—what was fame?

There was a low knock at the door.

"Yes?" Rupert called angrily, allowing himself the luxury of showing his annoyance at the interruption; it was long past the hour for any fashionable visitor.

"You are alone, Rupert?" It was his wife's voice.

"Yes, you can see I am alone. What on earth do you want?"

"I came to see your work. I have been to Aunt Secker's, and she tells me it is to go to be exhibited to-morrow; I cannot see it there, among the gayly dressed people, so I came here. I should not like your wife's to be the only eyes that have not seen it, Rupert."

"Well, there it is," her husband said carelessly, yet watching her face with intense interest; he had not

yet lost the habit of trusting his wife's opinion, though he never asked for it now.

Myrtle looked at it long, in silence, then she came to her husband's side, and said timidly, and with a faint color in her cheeks :

"I do not like it as well as my own, Rupert."

Her husband laughed lightly.

"Of course, one woman never admires another!" he said ; "you think your face far more beautiful, I presume."

"I did not speak of the beauty ; I only meant the work. Perhaps the marble is very difficult, but something is missing which is in the clay ; even the doves have lost delicacy. Forgive me, dear, if I hurt you, but you always wish to know the truth, Rupert."

Her husband did not answer, and Myrtle went on, afraid to offend him.

"After all, I dare say it pleases the lady, and that is the great thing, when you work out a commission."

"Of course it pleases her. She thinks it a great work, and so do some of my Roman friends—in fact everyone who knows anything about the subject ; and she pays well, and that is the chief point."

"Oh, no, Rupert!" his wife cried ; "that is not the chief point—there is where you mistake. Work for fame if you will, for truth, for art—but not for mere success as men mean it, not to *sell* well. Caleb used to say : If your aim is merely to pick up gold, you are almost sure to pick up dirt with it!"

"I tell you, Myrtle," her husband said, speaking with a throb of passion in his voice, "that the doubt of my success maddens me. Think how I have worked! I opposed my father ; I studied wherever I

could ; night and day my ambition was in my thoughts. You fancy it costs me nothing to live this life, to breathe with an unpaid, ever-growing debt about me, stifling me if I dare to think of it. Surely when a man strives as I have done, success is certain."

His wife knelt by his side, and clasped her arms about him.

" Rupert, be brave even if you fail," she whispered. " I am not sure about what people call poetic justice. We still tell children stories in which the wicked man meets his punishment and the good man his reward—sometimes I think we like to fancy it is so really ; we are right to keep them as long as possible from the sad knowledge that in the battle of life the soldier does not fail because he uses poisoned weapons. A coward still crawls to success by using knowledge told him in confidence ; and do we not see mean men in high places, and noble men down in the world because they cannot flatter ? When we are young we think true work must succeed—if it did we might hold much by success, but as it does not, we must think of truth first, and let success follow if it will."

Myrtle had spoken so earnestly that her husband did not interrupt her, and suffered her to clasp him as she would ; it was long since her arms had been about his neck.

" It is very well to take that high tone," he said at last, putting her from him, but not ungently; " you forget I am not alone. I must earn money ; you and the child must live. If my lot were different, if I could devote myself exclusively to my art, it would be nobler ; but sordid cares fetter me and weigh me down."

"Perhaps," his wife answered; "or perhaps the very things you call hindrances may strengthen you, Rupert. All your art does not lie in workmanship, my husband; the idea you express is something, and who can tell how our common daily life molds that?"

"You will never understand, Myrtle. You are content; life with your child—I do not say our present life, but one as simple, only freer from care—would satisfy you. Great Heavens! satisfy you! You little know men. We cannot exist where you rejoice; we want ease, luxury, pleasure; you women are bound up in your homes, your children, your household cares. Very well, we do not object, but beware of one thing, do not try to chain us with your chains—they are too short, and we shall break them."

Myrtle looked at her husband, and it dawned upon her slowly, and with no shock of pain, how terribly cruel a man can be to the woman he loves. He is capable toward her of an injustice of which he is seldom guilty to his brother man—he fails to put himself in her place. Continuous work is his, interrupted work is hers; but it is an error to imagine that therefore she can neither sympathize with him in his labor nor carry out her own with dignity.

Myrtle van Hals rose from her knees. There is one lesson which women require to learn, and which for the most part they learn with bitter tears, and that is when to be silent. Myrtle had learned it, and with tears, but it served her well; she was silent now. She turned and looked at the studio, and her heart sank. The Indian matting on the floor was covered with an exquisite pattern in dull red and ochre and green;

the curtain drawn across the raised platform where the models sat was of fine thick silk; the chairs were of varied shape with cushions or seats of Indian stuffs, carrying out the three colors in the matting on the floor; the walls were painted a faint, soft red.

The woman's heart in her swelled with indignation, as she thought of the bare home in which she had left her boy.

"Shall we go home, Rupert?" she said gravely; she did not trust herself to say more. But Van Hals had seen her glance round the studio, and with the proverbial self-excusing which accuses, said with some hesitation,

"You think I have spent a good deal here?"

"Yes."

"It is necessary, my dear; besides, some of the things are presents. But it is simply my stock in trade, as indispensable as a comfortable patient's room for a surgeon, or the display in his window to a silk merchant."

"Yes?" his wife said again, but this time with more of question in her tone; and Van Hals pursued the subject no further.

Next day the marble was taken to a small gallery, consisting of only two rooms, where were exhibited a few works by fashionable artists.

The statue had a niche to itself, lined with maroon cloth; and now a larger circle flocked to see it.

Leon went, with his daughter by his side, and one or two men who indulged in picture and statue buying listened to his verdict eagerly. What Leon admired would generally rise in the market.

"The sculptor is fortunate, Herr Leon," one of

these men ventured to remark; "I hear you have bought his statue."

Leon turned carelessly to the speaker.

"I? No, you are misinformed. It is pretty,"—and he looked critically at the marble,—"but it is weak; it is not original; there is no idiosyncrasy about it. When I buy, it is to sell again; this will not sell. No, it is my daughter who sat to the young artist for charity—she is interested in his wife!"

The Jew walked on, and Daria followed, her haughty face flushed, her eyes flashing fire, but she said not a word.

Then the critics stood round it. They talked much in what might be termed the hieroglyphs of speech, but the result was inevitable. The piece was a failure. To a certain point, that is. To be great, it should have been greater; life-size, pretentious rather than ambitious; to have justified its existence it should have been grand, and it was not grand. But, they added, with the cruel kindness which stabs the more because it is meant to heal, the sculptor would succeed well if he kept to small statuettes and vases.

And the gossips came and studied the group, with many whisperings. It seemed as if they had fancied they might find to which of the varied and varying stories about the sculptor and his model they might pin their faith, by gazing at the result of Van Hals' work and Daria's condescension.

And one evening, just as the gallery was being closed, Dr. Isencraw came.

He stood by the statue for some time, moving round it slowly. What he thought it was hard to tell. His was not an easy face to read. They say we make

our own mouths, and Dr. Isencraw must surely have worked patiently at his, even to the neglect of other features, for it was a notable mouth. The lips, laid firmly one on the other, but not pressed together, seemed to hold a happy secret worth learning; women and children trusted him, and the troubled among his patients in mind, body, or estate,—and they were many,—looking up at the face of their doctor as he stood by the bedside, would suddenly tell him their grief, with a certainty of finding sympathy and perhaps comfort. Still, to those who did not know him, his was an insignificant face, rendered almost ludicrous by its gleaming spectacles and flaxen aureole of boyish downy hair. Once, Myrtle, with the inborn need of her sex, even the strongest (or perhaps the strongest most of all), to find a master, had turned from the fair little doctor to the handsome ideal face of Rupert van Hals, not knowing that in the one she despised lay a power of true dominion the other would never gain. But that was long ago, and many things had changed since then, as Isencraw remembered, standing by the statue of Daria Leon, and thinking of Van Hals' meetings with the two women who influenced his life. Some might have thought, going back mentally "over the rough way of the world" across which the woman he had loved had had to tread, bloodying the thorns with her "unflinching foot," that it would have been better for Van Hals to let Myrtle drown than to save her for this, but Isencraw did not think so. He was absolutely sure that some life-lessons are worth learning at whatever cost, and sure too that Myrtle was worth teaching.

How long he stood in the niche of the gallery he

did not know, but the sound of the man who kept guard preparing to lock up roused him; he took off his spectacles and passed his hand over his small, short-sighted eyes—he had been in a dream.

The doctor hurried out and went to see some of his poorer patients, snatching a hasty meal on his way at a café. It was late when his work was over, and he turned to go home. As he passed the door of a fashionable restaurant, three or four young men came out, and he saw that one was Van Hals. They had been supping together and were talking loudly and with much laughter. Van Hals stood a moment to light his cigar.

A shabby man, with a threadbare coat and his face shaded by a wide-brimmed hat, stepped up to the waiter who was offering matches to the men, and touched his arm.

"Which is the great artist, Herr van Hals?" Isencraw heard him ask.

"The one with a light on his face, with his hair tossed back, and a low collar to show his handsome throat," answered the man, proud of his guest; "he is every bit an artist."

Then the waiter went in and the other moved into the shadow, and the doctor felt a little curious as to what he wanted with the sculptor.

At this moment Rupert caught sight of Isencraw, and greeted him cordially. The two men had not been over friendly of late, but Van Hals, warmed with wine and cheered by society, was disposed to forget all in the hilarity of the moment.

"Good-night," he nodded to his friends, "your way and mine are different; I will get Isencraw to see me

home." And he took the doctor's arm confidentially. Isencraw looked over his shoulder and saw the shabby man creep from his corner and follow them.

Their way led past Rupert's studio, and as they neared it, someone ran past them in the darkness, dropped a letter into the box in the door, and disappeared.

"That man is interested in you," said the doctor. "He asked the waiter to point you out as you came out of the restaurant."

"What a singular thing! I dare say he brings some dun's letter, but why he wants to see what his victim is like is curious."

"Shall you not go in?" asked Isencraw, as Van Hals would have passed the door.

"My dear doctor, when you have as many duns as I have,—which Heaven forbid!—you will let their letters cool until morning. However, come in, if you will." And he opened the door with his latchkey, struck a light, and lighted a lamp. Isencraw gave a long whistle.

"No wonder you are dunned, my friend, if you live in this luxury. This is a studio for a prince of sculptors."

"I have the misfortune to be the fashion," said Van Hals, with a smile, which canceled the word misfortune, "and I should lose many a small commission if my patrons, or rather my patronesses, thought I could work between whitewashed walls."

"So!" said the doctor. "Here is your letter."

It lay on the floor in the passage, where it had dropped through the slit in the door which did duty for a letter box.

Rupert assumed a mock-tragic air as he cut the

letter open with a knife, but as he read, the counterfeit, like Rosalind's swooning, came terribly near to reality.

With a face gray with a ghastly terror, he turned to Isencraw suspiciously.

"You brought me in—you saw the man—you know of this," he stammered.

"I know nothing," the doctor said, and it was impossible to doubt him.

Van Hals threw himself into a chair.

"Look at this," he cried, "will you, Isencraw? You understand such things, and I never did. I cannot understand money matters; I was not brought up to it, but—my God, I cannot owe this!"

Isencraw took the paper held out to him, and read it carefully, while Van Hals watched his face with a look of hungry despair.

"It is not very comprehensible," said the doctor. "Has Leon lent you money?"

"Of course he has, but not that amount—surely not that amount; and this is not from Leon."

"No; as far as I can make out, Leon owes this man money, and pays him with your bond, or whatever he has of yours. That is an unusual course to take, I fancy."

Van Hals leaped to his feet.

"Leon owe this man money! Impossible! Leon does not borrow; he lends, Isencraw. Besides, ruinous as the sum is to me, it is nothing to him; he need not pay it by means of my debt. Oh, it is a mistake, an absurd mistake!"

"It seems so, certainly. When did you promise to pay Leon?"

"I do not know. I thought it ran on over any time

I chose. I never understand these things," Van Hals said, with the air of a person who must not be held accountable for his ignorance.

"And,—excuse me,—but how much do you owe the Jew?"

"I have no idea. It goes back a long time—since I was in Rome; I dare say I spent a good deal there, but I lost count. I paid off my father's debt, and wanted to get rid of my own, but Leon would not hear of it."

Isencraw looked at him keenly.

"Has Leon any cause of enmity against you, Van Hals?" he asked suddenly.

"Enmity? What do you mean?" the sculptor said, pushing his hair from his damp temples. "I cannot have harmed him in any way; he is high above harm's reach, it seems to me."

"Even Achilles had a vulnerable spot," the doctor said, with a half-smile. "You know best, and I do not want to alarm you, but this looks to me like revenge."

"Revenge?"

"Yes; do you remember, long ago, when you first met Daria Leon I warned you that she had a way of luring men to destruction? What she does in love, her father does, when it suits his ends, in money affairs. Once a spy of his—and he has many spies—betrayed him. It is his policy that no man shall offend him with impunity, so he laid a deep plot. The man was a young clerk in a merchant's office; I knew him. The Jew set men to tempt him, to gamble with him and let him be successful, until at a signal from the master hand he lost largely, and, prompted by his companions, stole his employer's money to win back his losses, was ruined, and died by his own hand. He

told all to his young wife and to me the night he died. This is what Leon calls revenge."

"Horrible!" Van Hals said, his eyes on the doctor's grave face; "but I? I have done nothing; I am so insignificant."

"So was the man of whom I tell you; but he was to be a warning to others, so he was crushed as he lay in Leon's path."

"What can I do?"

"Go to-morrow to Leon, I should say; ask him what this means, and get him to let you pay by instalments—this sum would crush almost any man in your position. And now come home," Isencraw added, laying a pitying hand on Rupert's shaking frame, "and say nothing to your wife until you know."

In the cold night air Rupert's hopes revived; he returned to his first idea that the whole thing was a mistake. He recalled Daria's confident assurance that the loan was simply a salve to his honor, that but for his scruples it would be made a gift. Honor is the modesty of man, a Frenchman tells us, and like modesty, once wounded, salved, and patched, its life is apt to ebb quickly. As Van Hals walked home by the side of the doctor, he wished, many a time, that he had forsworn the independence urged by his wife, and had let himself be a pensioner on Daria Leon's bounty.

Isencraw bade him good-night with an anxious look which Rupert resented, as showing that his friend was unconvinced by his frequent assurance that the letter had its origin in a mistake easily set right in the morning. But his confidence was on his lips only; deep in his secret soul he knew that Leon had been luring him to his ruin all along, and for his daughter's sake.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE fatigue of a sleepless night is proverbial, but that which follows a night of dream-haunted sleep is sometimes equally wearing. The wine Van Hals had taken, the bodily and mental fatigue he had undergone, all tended to make him sleep heavily, but his dreams would have served as illustrations to Dante's Inferno. He was crushed by heavy weights; he was whirled about by the wheels of ponderous machinery; he was suffocated by poisonous gas; he was sinking in a quicksand—and, as his brain invented fresh torments, he saw always Leon's face horrible with a laugh of triumph.

At last as morning dawned he slept more quietly. Myrtle did not disturb him, for his face looked white and worn, and she thought he needed rest.

When he awoke it was late. In the next room he could hear the clatter of plates and cups, and the prattling voice of his child. He dressed quickly and went out without speaking to Myrtle, whose back was turned to the door as he passed.

He hurried on until he came to a lonely spot, and there pulled out the paper he had received the night before, and read it again. It was no nightmare; it was there in black and white before his eyes. He must see Leon. He walked quickly, but with his head down, and turned aimlessly along one street and another so that he found himself in front of the restaurant where he had supped the night before. The door was open; inside men were having coffee, or sitting comfortably by tables on which stood large

teapots, from which fat Dutchmen, cigar in mouth, were pouring themselves a decoction strong enough to shake their nerves for the day.

Van Hals slipped in quietly, and went to the man who often waited upon him at supper.

"Give me some brandy," he said hoarsely.

The man stared.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know you," he said, moving away to get the brandy.

Van Hals turned to a looking-glass on the wall. Haggard, unshaven, carelessly dressed, it was no wonder the waiter did not recognize the man, "every bit an artist," whom he had pointed out to the shabby stranger not twelve hours ago.

Rupert drank the spirit, and went out into the street. But this time he turned into a barber's shop and was shaved, and had his mustache curled and his coat brushed, hoping that by these outward signs of comfort he might disguise a mind ill at ease. He made his way to Leon's office, and Simon, from a small window adapted for the purpose, saw him enter and knew his errand.

"I wish to see Herr Leon," said Van Hals.

"Yes? I will ask," was the doubtful answer.

The speaker, a subordinate clerk, crossed the hall and passed into Simon's room.

"He cannot be disturbed. Simon will see you if you wish it."

This was better than nothing. Van Hals knew that Simon was in all Leon's secrets as far as money matters went; he would see Simon.

The young clerk ushered him into the room where the usurer's adjutant sat, apparently adding up the

number of the world's inhabitants, so wide and so long were the columns of figures before him.

"One moment," he said, without looking up; "sit down, Herr——. Seven and nine are——" The rest of the calculation was lost in a murmur.

Van Hals waited impatiently, coughing now and then, and moving his feet in his chair without for one moment disturbing the abstraction of the Jew before him. At last the door opened, and a voice said:

"The English duke must see you, sir."

"The English duke must wait; bring him in in seven minutes—unless your business can be done in five?" he added, turning quickly, and for the first time, to Van Hals.

"No, no——"

"Very well, in seven minutes. Now, sir, what can I do for you?"

Rupert had prepared a speech of mingled indignation and irony, in which the absurdity of the situation in which he found himself was to be played off against the treachery of which he must be the victim, should it be possible that the situation was contrived by Leon. But it is impossible to be indignant with a watch, figuratively speaking, laid before you; or to point irony with any success at a man who keeps his eyes running down a column of figures, and never for one moment looks you in the face. Rupert saw that if he delayed long Simon would again become engrossed in his calculations, so with a little hesitation he began.

"I imagine there must be a mistake here; if you will oblige me by looking at this paper, you will see what I mean."

Simon took the paper.

"No, I do not understand, sir. It looks right enough to me. What puzzles you?"

"I imagined—I did not imagine—I mean, I believed my loan was to continue indefinitely," the miserable sculptor said, conscious that Simon would negative this at once, and that time was passing swiftly.

"In one sense, yes; that is, we can again oblige you, I have no doubt, on good security, when the pressure is over," Simon answered, folding up the paper, and letting his eyes roam back to his figures.

"The pressure?"

"Is it possible you have not heard? A panic on the London Stock Exchange; calls made on us for the past week; old clients only able to weather the storm by large loans from us. No other house in Amsterdam—I may say in the world—could stand the strain."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"Simply this." Simon lowered his voice—he was entering the temple of Mammon, and he paid instinctive homage. "Leon foresaw this and instructed me to call in our long-standing small debts. Yours is one of the smallest, and the longest standing," said Simon, raising his eyes for a moment to feast on the dismay on his victim's face, "and I called it in; that is,"—with a smile which to Rupert seemed ghastly,—"I paid it out. A creditor, an importunate creditor came, and I gave him your bond. I had no ready money, I assure you, or it should not have happened. This strain does not affect our credit, but it hampers our floating capital."

"But the sum—the sum is enormous!" gasped Van

Hals, only half comprehending this incomprehensible statement.

"That I know nothing about; but a clerk shall go over the items with you; we had low interest, I think, twenty per cent.?"

"Great Heaven! Leon said nothing about interest."

"No? Still I presume you did not imagine, sir, that we got rich on putting out money to nurse where it would not fatten. If you should think of renewing this business with us, it would be as well to mention the interest, as at present we double it on all loans issued during this crisis."

"It is robbery; it is a trick!" cried Van Hals. "I was deceived. I will see Leon himself."

"Then, sir, you will make your own way to him," said Simon, bowing low, apparently to Rupert, really to the "English duke" who entered as he spoke. "I dare not speak to our chief when he is engaged."

Before Van Hals knew where he was, the door was shut behind him, and he was in the square hall where the waiting clients of inferior social rank sat leaning weary backs against the wall.

"Where is Leon?" he said loudly.

"In his private room; he cannot be disturbed," said a clerk.

"I will disturb him, if you will not," and walking to the electric bell at the entrance to the well-known passage leading to the Jew's room, he pressed it fiercely. The sharp, shrill trill rang like a cry through the hall. Van Hals waited. The door by which he stood remained shut, not a sound broke the stillness; the waiting clients moved uneasily and watched him

with curious eyes. He pressed the button again; there was no sound in response.

"Your bell is broken," he said angrily.

"No, it is not broken," a clerk answered, not very careful to hide a smile. "Herr Leon has disconnected it; he always does when he will not be interrupted. He does not only command, but he makes it impossible to disobey."

Bitterly mortified, Rupert turned away.

There was one more chance. He would bend his pride and go to Daria; what he had often refused he would ask now, a loan or gift from her private purse. A drowning man has no pride; he thinks of safety only.

Van Hals went round from the back of the house to the front door opening into the Keizer's Gracht. By this time it was past noon. The first leaves were coming out on the stiff trees before the houses, and the sun dappled the walls with their shadows. A carriage stood by the steps, and a servant in rich livery was making inquiries at the door. Rupert fell back.

She was not at home, or not at home to the occupants of the carriage, but she would see him at any hour.

"The Señora?" he asked, when the other visitors had driven away.

"She is not at home, sir."

"Take my card—it is important business. Here, I will write a line," and Van Hals took his pencil from his pocket. The man looked puzzled.

"Do you wish me to forward the card, sir? The Señora Daria is in Spain."

Then he knew all. Whether she had left willingly,

knowing what was to come upon him, and not daring to oppose her father or help her friend ; or whether she had been sent away lest her opposition should thwart or her help succor, all was the same.

She was gone, and he was a ruined man.

How he spent the hours after this he never knew, except that he was always walking, walking quickly, but in deserted thoroughfares—at least they seemed to him deserted, for he saw no one ; though as one or two friends afterward claimed to have met him and even spoken to him, getting no reply, he fancied possibly the streets had not been so empty as he imagined.

At last there was a surging in his ears and a rattle of chains and clanking tools. He had wandered to the docks, and one of the sluices was half-open and the water of the Y was rushing in. He had eaten nothing all day, and was faint and giddy. He went into a little eating-house, and had coffee and a roll. Then he remembered his creditor. Surely he had better go and see the man ; he might consent to wait for his money.

The wintry wind which the sun had driven back in the middle of the day was creeping back to its post at street corners, and Van Hals shivered with cold and misery. But he must go, and there was no time to lose. He got into one of the heavy lumbering hackney coaches drawn by two little Flemish horses which do duty for cabs in Amsterdam, and told the man to drive back to the street where Hellman lived. Hellman was the name of his creditor, and his address was in a quarter devoted to lawyers, and yet the man's letter had hardly seemed that of a lawyer.

Near his destination Rupert paid and dismissed his cab. He would find the house alone.

It was a dismal house with dirty windows, and an open door, at which a man appeared and asked his business.

"Herr Hellman," Rupert said, with dry, parched lips.

"In the roof," the man said contemptuously; but whether his contempt was for Van Hals, or for the man in the roof, did not appear.

Van Hals went up slowly, clinging to the dirty hand-rail, and once or twice leaning against the uninviting wall. He was not a man to stand much trouble; it affected him in body and mind, and pulled him down like a fever. The house seemed empty, for though he passed closed doors on every floor, the dust lay in drifts against them, and there was not a sound to break the dead stillness. At the top a door stood open at last, and Van Hals looking in saw a man sitting at a bare table, his head buried in his hands.

"Herr Hellman?" Rupert asked doubtfully.

The man rushed at him fiercely.

"Have you the money? Where is the debt? I am starving!" he said rather melodramatically.

"Is this your letter?"

"My letter? Yes. I am a lawyer—a lawyer without clients, without influence, without money. I work for the Jew Leon, curse him! I draw up deeds, deeds that need skill and secrecy; and he pays me with other men's bonds! He grinds me down, a Jew, a man of his own nation. I grind down the Christian with whose money he pays his debt. Now you know all. Give me my money!"

Vans Hals looked in the man's face. It was haggard like his own, but in the eyes gleamed a wild fierce light which made Rupert, sensitive in every nerve of his soul, and alone in the lonely house, tremble.

"Can you give me time?" he ventured to ask.

The man laughed.

"That is what they all ask!" he said. "What does it mean? Not time to pay the debt—for either you can pay me now, or you cannot pay me for months, perhaps years. The sum is large, even for Herr van Hals, the lady's sculptor!" The man's sneer made Rupert flush angrily. "No; that is not what you want time for, it is to run away! To get clear of the country if you can; to hide yourself in the slime at the bottom of a canal if you cannot. Neither of these courses suits me, until I am paid; afterward take which you will."

"I cannot pay you."

"That is nonsense; sell your studio with its luxurious furniture,—I have seen it,—give the check received for the marble figure of Leon's daughter; then, for that will not reach a quarter of the debt, raise money somewhere else, for Leon is dry for the present, is he not?" and again the grating laugh echoed in the empty room. "This will take time. I will therefore wait—in my own interest, not in yours—until the day after to-morrow. On that day the usual legal steps will be taken; an execution will be put in the studio, and at your private house, of which I have the name and number!" Of all his past sneers, the look with which he referred to Rupert's private house was the most galling.

It cut Van Hals' pride to think that this creature of Leon's, this low Jew, knew where he lived, and contrasted the poverty and meanness of his home with the luxury of his studio.

He turned to go downstairs. The man followed him a few steps.

"I am running a risk," Hellman said, "and perhaps I am a fool to trust you; but you look too fastidious for the bottom of the canal, even the one in the Keizer's Gracht—and I hardly think you will get out of the country!"

Van Hals looked back, steadying himself against the stair-rail.

"You need not fear," he said; "I shall not run away. If I get the money I will bring it to you here; if not, I shall be here, too, and you can do what you will with me."

Hellman laughed and turned on his heel, and Van Hals went down, and out into the street, now deserted and almost dark. His knees tottered under him. He must think out what lay before him, but he could walk no more, his strength was gone. In the next two days he must find means to save himself from ruin, and to do this he needed all his powers. And first, food and rest.

He entered the next shop he saw where food could be obtained, and ordering dinner, sat down to think. Where could he turn for help? To Harvey Prosser? No. Harvey and he were enemies—the boy dreaded him from the first; there was no love between them, and hard though it may be to do an enemy a favor, it is immeasurely harder to accept one at his hands. Rupert had stooped to much, but he could not stoop

to ask help from his wife's twin brother. Then he thought of Isencraw, but he was poor; and of Anton Secker, but here pride stepped in and stopped him. He knew no other friend whom he could ask; he must try money-lenders again. But how to find one. He only knew Leon.

Putting his hand into his pocket to ascertain if he had money enough to pay for a bottle of wine, he pulled out an English sovereign. This gave him an idea. He spoke English well, certainly fluently enough to deceive the Dutch woman who brought him his steak. He asked her, showing the English coin, where was the nearest money-changer, rightly judging that in this quarter he would be a money-lender also. She told him; and when he had dined, eating and drinking exactly what he thought necessary to give him strength for the task before him, he paid his bill, and began his hopeless work.

He knew it was hopeless from the moment when he pushed open the money-changer's door. What security could he offer? Nothing. What name could he give as reference? None.

One man gave him the address of another, just to get rid of him, and he tramped the streets wearily. At last, in despair, he even showed the letter from Hellman to a kindly faced Jew whom he had disturbed at supper, it being long past business hours, and asked if any escape were possible.

"I do not care what I pay in the end," Van Hals said, "if I can only tide over a year."

"You borrowed from Leon originally, I suppose," said the Jew, looking carefully at the letter.

"Yes. How do you know?"

"I can see his hoof mark," laughed the money-lender; "this is the way he goes to work sometimes. Either he wants the money, and wants to get it through a third person without offending you, or he does not care what becomes of the cash, so long as he has his lasso round your neck. I do not myself think it is money he is after here."

"But there is a panic on the London Exchange, and he has had to send large remittances."

The Jew winked.

"And this little trifle of yours tides him over, I suppose!" he said, balancing the letter on his finger-tip contemptuously.

Van Hals caught at the straw of hope.

"If it is a trifle, will you lend it me? I will give any interest you ask," he cried, leaning eagerly forward.

"It is a trifle to Leon, not to me," the money-lender said, handing back the paper; "but I'll give you a piece of advice, for the sake of your wild face, which tells of trouble enough to stir harder hearts than mine."

Then the man leaned forward, with his yellow, greasy face close to Rupert's, and his small keen eyes, now shining with pity, fixed on the sculptor's, and one impressive finger held up solemnly.

"There is not a Jew in Amsterdam," he whispered, "will lend you money to-night, nor for days to come. You have no security to offer; you must tell your tale, more or less, and when we hear it we know Leon has been at work, and it is ruin to thwart him. Now you know what few will care to tell you; but I had a son who went to the dogs, and it stirs my heart to see a man going his way. Good-night!"

Good-night! What a mockery the common words held!

Good-night! To a man going, as he had said, to the dogs! Good-night!

Rupert went out into the street once more.

It was all over. In two days he would be a beggar —perhaps in prison. He did not quite know what Hellman could do to him; he tried to remember the Dutch law about debtors, but he could not.

Then he thought of Myrtle and the child.

Well, it would be no worse for them than their present lot. In fact, it would be better; Myrtle would go back to Red Hill Farm and Harvey would keep her. It would be almost as if she had never married; and she would be content, even happy, with her boy. Over Rupert's bewildered, inconsistent mind came a jealous pang at the thought of the boy who would have power, after a time, to make his mother happy.

His father had not had the power, Rupert thought bitterly; he did not realize at the moment how little he had tried.

What should he do?

It was late. Dutchmen keep German hours, and their capital is not like London or Paris; theaters close early, and the lights in the houses begin to travel to upper windows in good time.

The lamps in the streets were few; the narrower and less frequented thoroughfares were silent. A restless wind was blowing up little eddies of dust as though searching for something.

It was cold, and Van Hals was very tired. Myrtle would be asleep. She never waited for him now. He needed rest. He would go home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT was near midnight when Van Hals reached his own door. There was not a light in the street, and it was hard to distinguish the canal from the roadway; to a stranger it might not have been possible, but Rupert noted a feeble glimmer from a sheltered rush-light at the head of a barge moored for the night, and knew where the water lay. In the distance a hum and murmur of voices, broken now and then by a scream or a burst of discordant laughter, came from the Jews' quarter, and by contrast the nearer silence seemed the stillness of death.

Looking up at the poor house which held his sleeping wife and child, Rupert sighed heavily. This was the end of his ambition. This narrow life which had seemed insupportable as a means to an end, was to be the end itself. Luxury, position, riches, fame—all had vanished, and in place of them stood poverty and disgrace. Surely death would be better; but Van Hals had not the courageous cowardice to die by his own deed like that other of Leon's victims of whom Isencraw had spoken. It was hardly that he was afraid; it was certainly not for the sake of his wife that he hesitated; but the details of self-destruction shocked his sensitive nature, and his vanity whispered that there must surely be a gleam of hope for a popular man like himself—a way out of the horrible labyrinth into which fate had pushed him.

He turned wearily to enter the house, and his dragging foot struck against something lying like a sack on the doorstep.

It was soft and heavy, like an animal under a bundle of rags. Van Hals opened the door, and groping, found on a chair in the passage a candle and matches which Myrtle always placed there when he came home late. He struck a light, and bent to examine the object on the step with some repugnance. As he stooped, a ray from the single candle shone on something which sparkled on the pavement. With difficulty Van Hals traced the glowworm-like spark, and held it to the candle.

His heart beat wildly. Glancing rapidly up and down the lonely street, he turned to the bundle of rags in the doorway, dragged it into the house, and shut the door upon himself and it. The rags covered a man, in a heavy, drunken sleep. It was Jan Kranz, the diamond cutter. The spark Rupert had seen was a diamond.

Fearfully, with shaking hands, Van Hals felt the drunkard's pockets. In one was a chamois leather pouch, black with age and dirt, through the substance of which he could distinguish little gritty points. He went into the sitting room, taking the candle with him. It was as he thought. The pouch was half full of small diamonds! Jan had probably stolen them, in which case, Van Hals argued, with the blood throbbing in his temples and beating at his breast like a mad prisoner, in which case he would make no inquiries if they were missing. The man was dead drunk; the theft would seem like a dream to him in the morning, without the stones to remind him. And they would save Rupert!

He feared every moment that Myrtle would hear him, and come into the room. He emptied the leather

pouch into his own pocket, put out the candle, and felt his way back to the drunken man. A terrible question remained to be answered: What should he do with him? Leave him outside the door he could not, to be found there in the morning by the passers-by. There was the canal; but Van Hals was not a murderer. A giant temptation had leaped from its lair, and, seizing him by the throat, had conquered him because it touched his necessity—a temptation to murder would appeal to his nature in vain—his vivid imagination would picture the inevitable haunting memory of a dead man.

Looking out from the open door, his eye caught the barge light; here was the way out of the difficulty. Van Hals knew how these boats were moored, their flush decks level with the pavement. He half-lifted, half-dragged Kranz, who made many a moan and breathed stertorously, to the edge of the canal. Feeling cautiously with his hand he found that the barge side touched the stonework. He laid his drunken burden down and rolled him on board. There was a murmur from the sack-like bundle on the deck, but Kranz settled himself to sleep, and Van Hals was safe.

He shut his door noiselessly, and lighted the candle again. He had left the leather pouch on the table. This would not do, he must hold nothing that could be identified as belonging to the diamond cutter. He went out once more and flung the compromising pouch on the barge beside its owner.

He was free! The load of debt and disgrace which lay upon him was lifted off, and for the moment he did not consider that it was rather its character which was

changed than its weight. The ill that all the world must know of us looks blacker than the evil we know of ourselves. For a time Van Hals had only a sense of wild exultation ; all after-consequences he flung to the winds. He would sell the diamonds to-morrow, sell them to Leon himself ; there would be a grim sense of satisfaction in paying him literally in his own coin—that is, if it was true that Hellman was Leon's tool. And as the immediate horror of ruin faded before his eyes, the sculptor was disposed to give Leon the benefit of any doubt that might exist on that question.

He pulled a shawl over his knees and sat down by the window. He would not lose sight of the barge and its freight. He knew the habits of the canal people. In the early morning the boat would be loosed from its moorings and go on its way ; until that happened he must watch. His brain was on fire, and the throbbing in his temples seemed to him as if it must be heard in the stillness. He had passed the stage of intense fatigue, and alert, sensitive, nerve-thrilled wakefulness, had taken the place of sleep. He began setting himself mental puzzles involuntarily, and as if he were outside himself. He propounded questions in which the sophistry of his religious creed formed a curious medley with the cynicism of what he was pleased to call his philosophy.

At whose door would the guilt lie of this theft which Kranz had begun and he had finished? Without Kranz he would not have touched the diamonds. Even if he had known how to take them he would not have taken them. Why? asked his cynical philosophy. Where lay his safeguard, in civilization or

probity? It was simply that to him, Rupert van Hals, the risk was too great. To fall from his height on fame's ladder, a promising sculptor, and take his place on the pavement, a detected thief—this was too terrible a possibility to be risked; but suppose he had been Jan Kranz, in the gutter to begin with, and where was the startling contrast one glance at which was to prove his safeguard?

Then there was the question of risk of detection.

Kranz must have laid himself open to possible discovery when he took the diamonds, presumably direct from the workshop; with Rupert this possibility was reduced to a minimum. A drunken thief loses what he has stolen; it is not likely he will trace the theft of a theft. Probably, thought Van Hals, going back to his sophistry weaving, the danger on one's head lessens the guilt, and the absence of risk increases it; this seemed but fair, and he was disposed to think that, notwithstanding Kranz's origination of the theft, himself and his poor brother of the gutter were equally guilty.

But with all this the night seemed very long.

Van Hals crept into the next room and listened to the quiet breathing of his sleeping wife and child; he was conscious of a sense of relief that he need not now tell Myrtle of his debt. But by this time his keen feeling on the subject was blunted; a sort of apathy was stealing over him; it did not seem to him as if anything mattered much. He went back to his post by the window and fell asleep.

A noise for which he had listened even in his sleep awoke him; he started up shivering with the cold of early dawn. For a moment he could not realize where

he was, though he knew that the noise which had disturbed him concerned him in some way. Suddenly he remembered all, and turned to the window. The barge which had been moored opposite his door was moving slowly away; a squat Dutchman, pipe in mouth, could be seen in the pale, gray light pushing it on by means of a pole, and as he pushed he made a droning, measured sound, somewhat broken by the pipe between his lips. On deck, Rupert could see nothing but a heap of tarpaulin and a coil or two of rope. He watched the heavy boat on her sluggish course along the canal, each unconscious, unsuspicious movement of the boatman making him tremble lest he should discover the hidden passenger and return; until at last the barge faded into the shadow of the houses, and the sculptor's watch was over and he could dare to sleep.

He slept long and heavily, and when he awoke his limbs were stiff and cramped, and his mouth burned like an oven. He was alone, and the house was quiet; Myrtle had probably taken the child and gone about the day's small marketing. He decided on taking the diamonds to Leon; he knew no other man in Amsterdam who would be likely to buy them, and there was a certain pleasure in letting the Jew see that he was out of his power.

How could he account for the possession of the stones? He had telegraphed to a friend—an Englishman, the English would do any piece of quixotic madness—asking for a loan, and he had sent diamonds. Yes, that would do; and Van Hals found a cigarette box which he had bought in London, and in which the diamonds might be supposed to

travel by post. He poured them in quickly, letting them run through his fingers, and shut the lid with some haste, lest his wife should come in and discover him; then he put the box in his coat pocket and opened his door.

A cold blast of air met him, and he saw that Myrtle was out on the doorstep. She turned when she heard him with anxiety on her face.

"I am afraid some accident has happened to poor Kranz," she said, with much concern; "I cannot get rid of Krebs; the dog haunts our door. If he hears a step in the distance he runs a little eagerly, but not seeing his master he comes back and smells round here and then lies down again."

Rupert looked at his wife suspiciously. Had she any knowledge of the event of the past night hidden behind her inopportune remarks? But the genuine perplexity on her face reassured while it annoyed him.

"Nonsense, Myrtle," he said hastily. "Shut the door and do not be foolish. If you fancy every man has met with an accident whose dog hangs about your door, you will have calls enough upon your pity."

"No, Rupert, it is not that only; but the dog is uneasy. See, he is up again, and sniffing the ground right up to the edge of the canal. Oh, perhaps poor Kranz fell in when he was intoxicated! I am sure there is something wrong!"

"Upon my word, you are very absurd, Myrtle. Let the dog be uneasy, and the man drunk, what does it matter? If Kranz is drowned there is one Jew less in Amsterdam, and that is all the better for Christians. I want some breakfast."

Myrtle prepared his breakfast and said no more,

and Rupert lighted a cigar and took up a newspaper to stop the conversation. Presently he heard a woman's voice in the passage, and caught Kranz's name again. It was Esther, who had come to tell Myrtle her trouble; Jan had not been home all night, and she was frightened.

"What fools women are," Van Hals muttered to himself as he listened. "Here is a drunken Jew missing, and the very woman he has dragged down into poverty is ready to cry for him."

"He must have been here," he heard Esther say, and he listened more eagerly. "Krebs has followed him so far, you may be sure. But why should he come to your house?"

"He never rang," Myrtle answered; "I do not suppose he knew it was our house. It was by accident he stopped here—if he did stop."

"I am sure of it. Look how Krebs pulls my dress with his teeth; watch him smell about right up against the door. Poor Jan was the worse for drink, that I know, and he has either fallen in one of his heavy sleeps by your door, or he has intended to ring and not found the bell. It is strange that Krebs cannot trace him beyond here, for he must have gone further."

The two women talked and wondered, as women do, turning the subject over, until Rupert grew vexed and uneasy. He had not the courage to go out; suppose Myrtle asked him if he had seen Kranz last night? He waited impatiently, and presently he heard the Jewess call Krebs to go home, but the dog would not move. Looking out of the window Rupert could see the thin bony creature keeping guard on the spot where his miserable master had slept, resolute and

dangerous. Esther at last went away without him, and then Krebs stretched his poor little white body on the step and rested.

Van Hals did not like the dog's presence. Like many Dutch houses of inferior class, the house in which he lived had but one entrance; there was no other way out. He must pass the sentinel on his steps before he could dispose of the diamonds.

He told himself the dog would not notice him, and yet he found himself wondering whether its keen scent would enable it to discover that he had been with Kranz, and he was glad he had got rid of the leather pouch.

There was no time to be lost; he had only one day in which to get the money for Hellmann, so with an uncomfortable shrinking about his legs, he opened the door and faced Krebs. The dog sniffed at him, whined, and looked into his face pitifully; its leanness, and the two long-drawn lines, which looked like tear-channels, from its hollow eyes, giving it a strange plaintiveness. Relieved that Krebs did not treat him as an enemy, Van Hals walked quickly in search of Leon, mentally rounding and padding the little fiction he had prepared, until it seemed well-fitted to stand the Jew's scrutiny.

He asked for Simon.

In the first place he did not think Leon would see him, and then he rather preferred to face the questions of the man he deemed inferior in astuteness.

Simon was in his room, and looked surprised at the speedy return of the artist.

"I have some jewels to dispose of," said Rupert, plunging at once into his subject; "it is my only way

of paying the debt you know of. Will you look at them?"

"Jewels?" said Simon dubiously, pursing up his lips. "You see, Herr van Hals, there is the ready money difficulty again. We have literally no cash at liberty."

"Your bill—Leon's promise to pay would be sufficient," said Rupert eagerly. "Hellmann would accept that."

"I doubt it," Simon said, with a peculiar smile, and Rupert remembered that Isencraw had fancied Hellman was a dummy.

"But you will look at the diamonds?" he ventured.

"Diamonds—are they? I will see my chief if that is so; he is mad on diamonds, and may strain a point about them. What sort are they?"

"I do not know; I am no judge; some are uncut. Will you look at them?"

"No, no! There are strict orders that all diamonds go through Leon's own hands. Keep them shut up, and I will see him."

Simon left the room, and Van Hals breathed more freely. He had been asked no questions which argued suspicion, and he began to think his little fiction would not be required.

"This way," Simon said suddenly, putting a beckoning finger in at the door, and Rupert followed rather nervously.

Leon was alone, pacing up and down a long narrow room into which Rupert had not before been admitted. He stopped when Van Hals entered, and measured him from head to foot with a haughty and contemptuous glance.

Then he drew a chair to a table and pointed to another, which Rupert took, Simon standing behind him and opposite to Leon.

"You have diamonds to dispose of?" the Jew asked, with a curl of his lip which looked like a snarl.

Rupert laid the box before him on the table.

"Where did you get them?"

"I wrote to a friend, or rather I telegraphed to a friend, in England for a loan of money, and he sent me these."

"Ah, money's tight," said Leon, glancing at Simon, who replied by a sound between a groan and a chuckle close at Rupert's ear.

"Your friend sent them in this box?" Leon went on.

"Yes."

"He is not a diamond merchant, I imagine," Leon said, turning the box in his hand contemptuously.

"No, he is a bullion merchant," answered Rupert, thinking some detail was necessary.

"So!" said Leon grimly, opening the box. "These English are generous. Uncut small diamonds—sparks they are called in the trade. Did your bullion merchant think they would pay your debt?"

"Will they not?"

"They are only used for a setting round large stones, and half of them are uncut, and will cost money yet. Your bullion merchant might have sent something better in his cigar box."

Van Hals began to think he had better have left the drunken diamond cutter undisturbed.

Suddenly a change came over Leon's face; it darkened with a darkness which seemed to spread under

the yellow skin, as a flush of color might spread on another face. He had been turning the box when his fingers came in contact with a larger diamond; he held it between his finger and thumb, and devoured it with his eyes. It was not very brilliant, and the cutting was peculiar and old-fashioned. The Jew took a magnifying glass from his pocket and examined the diamond intently. There could be no doubt about it, it was one of the missing stones of his wife's necklace. Slowly he lifted his eyes from the gem to Rupert's face; there was no mistaking his expression—it was one of genuine bewilderment.

Simon, surprised out of his usual subservience by a glance at his master's face, started forward, only to be motioned back peremptorily by Leon, who, saying something with extreme rapidity, and in a language Van Hals did not understand, hurried from the room.

When he returned there was an appreciable difference in his manner; it was conciliatory, and yet it hid a secret triumph, which made Simon pity the young man before him. Rupert was uneasy; the sight of the large stone troubled him.

"Do you know how your friend became possessed of this?" Leon asked, opening his hand with care, much as a naturalist might, who held some valuable specimen of insect life of which he feared the escape.

"I protest," Rupert said earnestly, "I did not know of its existence until this moment!"

There was distress on the sculptor's face, and Leon did not doubt his statement.

It was true enough; Van Hals had not remarked the larger diamond when hurriedly transferring the small ones from one receptacle to another. Now he

was startled at his theft, and almost regretted it; for with a perverted sense of right and wrong, what he had done seemed robbery only when he saw the large jewel. He had amused himself with apportioning guilt between Kranz and himself, but until this moment he had not realized that he had committed a crime; and crime is guilt's embodiment, and far more terrible in its realism than its ghostly double. He began to wish he could have the stones again, with power to wash his hands of the whole business.

Perhaps Leon saw the mingled fear and shame in his face, for he asked no more questions, but drew a check-book from his pocket.

"I will buy the diamond," he said, laying it in his palm tenderly. "I shall be interested—when you hear from your friend—to know how he got possession of it; for I will not conceal from you that it is stolen property."

Rupert started to his feet, white as death. The Jew bent his head with a half apology, and glanced at Simon.

"I do not mean to say your friend can know anything of the theft; probably not. But this gem was stolen from me years ago, and I have been searching for it and others like it ever since. They have a value to me as heirlooms."

Rupert found speech at last, putting strong constraint upon himself.

"Is it possible to identify diamonds?" he stammered.

"Possible! It is impossible to prevent identification in most cases. In this case the stone might be recut, and that would disguise it to a certain extent;

but in common with its fellows, it contains a peculiar mark, almost a flaw, and that stamps it forever. Well, I buy it. But understand, I do not pretend to give you its full value; I could detain it and make inquiries; it is mine, and I can prove it. But I prefer to secure it quietly, and I will give you for it the amount of your debt. What is it?"

Simon had to push Rupert's arm before he answered; he seemed to have lost all power over his will, and to be Leon's tool.

He named the amount.

"And who is the creditor?"

"Hellmann."

"Ah, a hard man!" murmured the Jew, with another inscrutable glance at Simon, who, keeping close behind Rupert's chair, gave the young man no opportunity of seeing his face.

Leon wrote out a check, folded it thoughtfully, and held it while he pushed the box containing the smaller diamonds across the table to Van Hals.

"These are useless to me; you may as well keep them," he said carelessly.

"No, no!" Van Hals cried, with involuntary horror in his tone. He would have no more to do with the stones.

Leon shot a dart from his cold dark eyes which seemed poisoned with contempt for all humanity, himself included; and Van Hals, taking the check, went out in silence, and ashamed to the core of his soul.

The two men left behind listened until his retreating footstep was lost in the distance, and then drew close together by the table.

"Daria may come home," Leon muttered, more to himself than to Simon.

Simon was in all his secrets but those that concerned his daughter; Daria stood on sacred ground to her father.

"The Señora may return?" the satellite ventured to repeat.

"Yes. I sent her away because I knew there would be a duel between her father and her lover, and if the fool fell she would hold me guilty. But it is no murder now, it is a suicide; she may come home and see him die by his own deed."

"I do not understand."

"No, how should you? I do not speak of bodily killing, Simon. I meant to kill his reputation, so that he might be contemptible to himself and the woman he has bewitched; therefore I claimed my debt, as you know. It has led to more than I hoped. Van Hals himself stole this diamond."

"God of Abraham!" cried Simon, "it is not possible!"

"It is true, I tell you. Cannot I read men? How he knew of its existence, I know not; how he stole it, I know not. He may have an agent, and it was probably taken by accident, and only the theft of the smaller diamonds was intended. But I looked at his face and read thief in his eyes—he is a novice, and he was ashamed."

"But you seemed surprised when you saw the stone," Simon said, at a loss to account for Leon's evident bewilderment.

"Surprised! I was astounded. I expected the stone, Simon; but by other hands. Of all men on

earth Van Hals was the last I thought could bring it to me. That is why I do not accuse him yet. I must know more, and for this I must wait. For this, and for my daughter."

Leon paused, and after a few minutes Simon, knowing his moods well, left him alone. It was as he had said; while he prepared a trap for Van Hals, his daughter was sent away; she must not be a spectator of mere revenge. Now it was a matter of just retribution, and he would wait her return before bringing his accusation. It was no longer a question of hoodwinking a victim, but of unmasking a pretender.

After some time Leon rang his bell and a clerk appeared.

"When Kranz reports himself, let me see him at once," he said.

But Kranz did not report himself for many days.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEN Jan Kranz awoke from his heavy sleep on the barge deck, his first sensation was one of onward movement, but he was so much accustomed to the phenomena of giddiness and misery attendant on a state of chronic drunkenness, and so convinced by experience of the wisdom of keeping quiet, that he turned on his side under the tarpaulin to which he had crept for shelter, and dozed off into forgetfulness. But this second sleep did not last long; the tarpaulin which covered him was roughly hauled aside, and a gruff voice saluted him in Dutch, demanding his business in mingled surprise and anger.

It was broad daylight, and the sun struck on his bleared eyes painfully; he closed them instinctively, and struggled into a sitting posture. A kick, combined with some of the oaths which the curious may hear on the water-way of every country, aroused his bodily and mental attention, and he opened his eyes again. Before him, with the tarpaulin still in her brawny hands, stood a woman, laughing as heartily as a countryman at a show, while her husband questioned Jan angrily.

"How did I come here?" Jan murmured at last, his quavering words running weakly together, and forming a somewhat unintelligible sentence. "I do not know where I am yet."

"You are on a barge, man, carrying garden stuff into town and fetching a lot of things out; and what is more, you came on board last night while we were moored, and I want to know what you came for."

It was the woman who spoke this time, for she was curious to unravel the stranger's history, and knew her husband's harsh questions would only frighten him.

"I never came," protested Kranz, with a feeble shake of the head; "they must have put me on board for a frolic."

"They? Who are they?" cried the woman; while the man, having probably an experience of his own to guide him, asked:

"So you were drunk last night, were you?"

"I may have been," the Jew answered, with a cringing look. "I'll get up and look about a bit, and then maybe I'll remember. I want to remember," he added, muttering to himself.

"Leave him alone," the bargee said, with a grunt; "he is doing no harm there, and we'll put him ashore after a bit."

He went back to his work, and put up a brown sail to catch the wind, now blowing freshly across the open flat country. His wife, with a child clinging to her skirts, stood, open-mouthed, staring at Jan.

Jan looked about him curiously. They had left the town behind, and the only objects that broke the dead level in front of them were windmills and the high wooden machinery of bridges. Kranz looked down at his thin shaking hands, which would not lie still on his knees, and was sure of one thing—that he had been drinking. Then his dull brain slowly brought back to him a low tavern with lights, and noise, and laughter,—or what passed for laughter,—with his companions. He had been there,—he remembered it dimly,—but when had he left, and how, and with whom? Who had brought him here on this barge deck?

He raised his eyes and looked at the slowly moving flat shore, at the strip of water between the shore and the deck, at the deck itself, and last at a little fat Dutch child who stood within a few feet of him.

The child had round red arms, and in its dumpy fingers it was twisting something which seemed familiar to the Jew. He looked at it, until recognition and recollection rushed at once to his aid, and, as he knew his own leather pouch, he remembered everything.

"That is mine—give it me," he cried quickly, and took the pouch from the child's hands. "Empty!" he muttered, turning it inside out with trembling

fingers. "Empty! And Leon? I took them, I know I took them. Some for me, and one for him,—it was but fair to have some for me,—and they are gone!"

The woman came back while he muttered feebly.

"So that is yours?" she said. "It's like enough. The child found it, and played with it, but he's done it no hurt; it was dirty to start with."

Jan looked at her with weak cunning.

"Come, come!" he cried, trying to bluster; "it is fine asking how I came here. I ask you something. Where are my diamonds?"

The woman burst into loud laughter again, and beckoned to her husband.

"Where are his diamonds? he says. He wants his diamonds, man! No wonder he looks so doleful; he misses his rings and his other things, poor fellow!"

"I tell you there were diamonds in that pouch, and you have stolen them," Krantz repeated very weakly, for his head was swimming.

"What are they?" the bargee asked his wife.

"Those shining glass things the ladies wear; I saw them in a shop-window once. He looks like them, he does!" the woman said contemptuously.

The bargee looked at the feeble object before him.

"Look here," he said, with his broad face close to Kranz's thin one, "if you had diamonds, or whatever you call them, in that pouch, you stole them; best say nothing about them, and we'll say nothing to you."

"I tell you they were not mine, they were my master's. I am a diamond cutter; I am trusted with

these things." Kranz had not felt himself above his audience for many a day, and he spoke quite loftily.

Suddenly he remembered Leon, and knew that he would not be serving his hard master's interests by talking in this open way of diamonds. He hesitated, trembled visibly, and contradicted himself. The bargee was shrewd enough. He saw there might have been something of value in the pouch; he also saw that if Kranz chose to accuse him of any foul play on the barge it would be awkward, so he determined to conciliate the weak drunkard, whose habits placed him almost at his mercy.

"Listen to me, my friend. Those friends of yours who so kindly saw you on board my boat in the dead of the night, took care of your valuables for you, depend upon it. Come down below and have a nip of Schiedam and talk it over."

Jan was easily persuaded to go down. In half an hour the bargee came on deck, and took the tiller from his wife's hand.

"He won't trouble more about his pouch. He is lying on a sack, and can't remember where he is. When we come to a place that will suit, we'll land him. It will come expensive to keep him drunk, and he'll be troublesome sober."

This plan was carried out.

"Here's a friend we've given a lift to!" cried the jolly bargee, when they got to a village with a little waterside tavern where they were known.

Kranz was helped out, very merry, very much intoxicated, and placed on a bench by the wall, and after a time the barge moved on.

When the diamond cutter came to himself, his one

idea was to say nothing about his loss; he felt he had nearly betrayed himself, and now he must speak to no one until he saw Leon.

It was four or five days before he got back to Amsterdam. He walked, for he had no money. Sometimes people gave him food, but sometimes he had to work for it, and that delayed him; he slept, too, a great deal, and so lost time, for his scanty meals consisted of a much larger proportion of liquid than of solid food, and he was worn out with bodily fatigue and mental fear, and sleep came more readily to him than it would have done to a man of higher capacity.

At last, just at dusk, he felt the stony town pavement under his feet, and knew that he would see Leon that night.

Footsore and dirty, he limped miserably on for another hour or so, keeping, as well as he could, steadily in the direction of the Jew's house. He crossed the Keizer's Gracht, where the lamps were lighted, and a splendid carriage forced him to stop a moment. He looked in; two ladies sat immediately facing him, and in one he recognized Leon's daughter. She was leaning forward smiling, and talking to a man seated opposite, and whom Krantz did not see.

It was Rupert van Hals; so the two partners in a vulgar crime met within arm's length, without knowledge of each other—the Jew almost at his last gasp, trembling with a sense of failure, the Christian reckless, confident, fearless of detection, and secure of success. Who could suppose there was a link between them? Yet one man held that link in his merciless hands, and that man was Leon the Jew.

As days passed by and he heard nothing of Kranz,

Leon had begun to fear that something untoward had befallen his agent, in which case the clew for which he waited might be hard to find. It was therefore with great relief that he heard the diamond cutter had reported himself at last, and was ready to see his master.

"Let him come in," the usurer said. "Is he drunk?"

"I think not," was the answer; "he seems half starved and faint."

Leon sent for one of his house servants, and ordered bread and soup to be brought in, but no wine.

Jan tottered into the room, the lamplight dazzling his weak eyes, the soft carpet seeming uncertain foothold for his weary feet. He steadied himself by the table, and bowed with his old cringing subservience to Leon.

The usurer pointed to the food on another table.

"Sit down and take some warm soup and bread," he said, "and when you are ready come here and tell me everything."

Poor Kranz muttered something about not eating in Leon's presence, but the sight of food was too much for him, and he devoured it ravenously. Leon had been prudent in giving him no wine, for he would have been powerless to tell his story if spirit of any kind had touched his brain.

Over and over again he had said that story to himself as he walked the lonely roads and dykes outside the city; slowly the memory of all that had happened had come back to him, and now he must tell it to his master to have its difficulties cleared.

Leon sat, as was his habit, with his face in shadow, while the lamplight fell full on Kranz.

"Where is my diamond?" Leon asked abruptly.

"I do not know, excellency; I had it safe, but——"

"You lost it?" the Jew asked carelessly. He did not believe Jan had ever seen the diamond.

"I cannot have lost it; it must have been stolen. If I had lost it, I should have lost the pouch. I have the pouch still."

Jan spoke slowly, and as if he had already argued the point over with himself, and drew a dirty leather pouch from his pocket.

Leon's attitude changed. The man was speaking the truth; he must know more of this.

"Begin at the beginning and tell me all you know."

If he was to unravel the mystery, Leon knew he must let the man tell all in his own way.

"When your excellency told me I must take the diamond, I had to wait many days and watch for a chance. First I found out where it was kept."

"Fool! I showed you the place myself!" broke in Leon.

"You showed me the safe where it was locked with other jewels, where even fire could not touch it. I had to watch until they moved it from there."

"Ha! Go on."

"One day I was with the overseer, and I heard orders given for that stone and others in the great safe to be cut, so I knew my time had come. I had made myself useful to the overseer, as you bade; fortunately he bets continually. I told him things—news I had got from Hellmann—that helped him in his betting, and he almost always won; so he liked me."

"Shrewd enough!" muttered Leon, as Jan paused

and wiped his forehead with his trembling hand. He was fearful of forgetting what he had to tell, he had forgotten it so often before.

"There was a lottery—the last great lottery, to be decided a week ago. The overseer wanted money, and he talked to me one day about the highest prize in the lottery—it would set him up for years, he said. So I told him of the yellow stone—one of the diamonds he had orders to cut; I told him it would bring luck to the man who had it in his possession on the day the lottery prizes were drawn. I told him this and watched him."

"Well?"

"It was in his care for cutting, and he took it, as I knew he would, on the lottery day and put it in his locked desk—a great tall upright one where he stands to write. I laid my plan, for it was my last chance; when the lottery was over, he would give the stone to be cut, and I should lose—all your excellency promised."

"It is enough. I promised. Go on."

"I made Hellmann give me the first list of the prize numbers. I took it to the workroom, and gave it to some men at the further end. Then I told the overseer that the men had got the list. He was burning to know his fate. He tore down the room and read his number. Strange to say he had won a prize; not the first, but very good, and he was wild with excitement. I knew where the diamond was; I put out my hand——"

"And found someone had been there before you?" interrupted Leon.

"No," said Kranz, in some surprise, "I took the diamond, and went away."

"You took the diamond?"

"Yes, excellency. If he had not won the prize he might have noticed or thought of me. The stone did bring him luck, and he could think of nothing but claiming it; at least that is how I account for no search being made for me."

"What became of the stone?"

Jan was seized with a nervous tremor which threatened to disappoint Leon of the conclusion of his story. He was evidently in abject terror of his master's anger, and it was only after absolute pardon had been promised that he could be induced to go on.

"I was to wait until dark to bring it to you—your excellency told me so," he pleaded; "so I put it in my pouch and waited for night. And some of my friends found me waiting about in our quarter, and—and——"

"And they gave you some drink, I suppose, and you got drunk, and you know no more," the Jew said, in keen irritation at the man's stupidity, not in anger, for the diamond was his, and he cared nothing that Jan had lost it.

"Pardon, master! I do know more," cried poor Jan, ignoring the first charge, but defending himself from the second; "I awoke next morning on a barge, and my pouch was empty—the barge people must have emptied it."

"Did you tell them so?"

"Yes, but they denied it; and I was weak and they were strong, and they would not put me on shore until I promised to say no more about it—and I wanted to come and tell you all, master, and I promised," concluded Jan weakly, and diverging from the truth somewhat widely.

Leon paid little attention. He was thinking.

"How did you get on the barge? Did you find it moored, and lie down on it to sleep?"

"No, that I feel sure of; because I can remember leaving the tavern, and walking on looking for Krebs or for Esther, and they did not come, and I sat down on some steps to wait and fell asleep."

"Ah! Who are these persons you name?"

"Esther is my wife's sister; she meets me at night if I am late."

"And Krebs?"

"Krebs is a dog; he is very faithful to me, and I thought he might meet me—he does sometimes."

Jan's voice softened as he thought of his dog friend; Leon was not angry, and he was getting braver.

"Does he lead you home?" Leon went on with questions, but somewhat mechanically—he was putting possibilities together.

"He does not exactly lead me, but I keep sight of his white coat in the darkness, and I make my way following him. It's lucky he's white," Jan said feebly. His tale had cost him a great effort, and he almost dozed as he sat there, while Leon thought.

Presently he looked up with a start. Leon was asking something, his keen eyes fastened upon him.

"I imagine you put my diamond with some small ones, to steady it in the pouch, did you not?"

"I, excellency? No, excellency—indeed!" But Leon saw the man was lying now, and with a contemptuous smile stopped further asseveration.

It was clear to him that Van Hals had found the man asleep, and, probably by an accident, had discovered the pouch of diamonds, and the temptation to

pay his debt by their means proved too much for him. It had been evident that Rupert was no judge of diamonds, and in his hurry he had failed to remark the large one; if he had seen it he would probably have been afraid to show it, as being too compromising, so if Jan had not stolen the small diamonds on his own account, the mystic gem might have escaped its owner after all.

Leon determined to let Jan go without accusing him directly of purloining for his own benefit. The money-lender had his stone safe, and two men in his power, and he could afford to be lenient. Kranz was a poor creature, a useful tool taking him at his best, and Leon had no grudge against him. He would receive his promised reward, and would be dismissed; it was possible that at same future day his master might claim a service about which he should hesitate, then would be the time to remind him of the small diamonds he had taken from the works.

"Go to Simon," Leon said at last; "he will pay you. He knows what I promised, and to-morrow you can go back to your work."

Jan looked frightened.

"Is it safe?" he asked.

"You are afraid they will accuse you of—but no matter of what; they will not accuse you."

"But the yellow diamond, excellency?"

"Ah, I had forgotten you do not know what has happened. Your overseer had taken fright and shipped for America, or so they think; at all events he has disappeared. I could not understand why he went, but it is evident that when he found the diamond missing he dare not face inquiry. All

things that went wrong last week are put down to him," Leon added significantly; "you need not fear."

"But the diamond?" again asked Kranz bewildered; "Is the overseer suspected of taking it, master?"

"Suspected? of course he is suspected. Mind you say nothing to remove suspicion from him, or it will turn on yourself infallibly. At present your employers are merely advertising for the missing man, and I hear they have paid something considerable to the person who confided the stone to them pending its recovery. However, this does not concern you. Go back, and if any inquiries are made, say you were drunk for a week. You are a good workman; they will fine you and take you in again."

"And if the yellow diamond is brought back, I am to let your excellency know?"

"Yes, let me know at once," Leon said, his face relaxing with a rare sense of humor. "It is a lucky stone—it will find its way home."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEANWHILE Leon's daughter talked with Rupert van Hals, and their talk was low-toned and interrupted by long pauses. The break in their intercourse had opened their eyes to their true position; they were like people standing on the edge of a precipice to whom a sudden gleam of light has shown their danger, and who feel that they must draw back boldly, or hold each other's trembling hand in the darkness.

They were not alone, for the first time Daria herself had chosen that a friend should be with her, and a Spanish cousin sat at a piano in a recess and played operatic music with all the abandon of a musician.

"Did you think I had been sent away?" Daria asked.

"I hoped you had been sent away, Señora."

"Hoped; and why?"

"Because I did not like to think you had left by your own choice," Rupert said seriously.

"Well, you were right; also you see I return as soon as my sentence of exile is commuted. But you are changed, sculptor mine—changed terribly, and in so few days!"

"How changed?" Rupert asked; but he did not look in her face as he spoke.

"You are pale, but it is not that; you are weary and preoccupied and *distrait;* you talk to me, but your thoughts are not with your words, they are far away. But I am not jealous, my friend, they are not happy thoughts."

"I have cares, Señora; they will pass. Let us talk of other things."

"Oh, tell me!" Daria cried suddenly, "why were you so anxious to see me, a few days after I left? The servant said you called, and wanted to send in your card, and seemed annoyed that I was not at home. What was it?"

"Ah, that was a bitter day," Van Hals said, with a perceptible contraction about his eyes and mouth, "but it is over; we need not speak of it."

"Tell me."

Rupert hesitated, but when Daria spoke as she

spoke now he always did her bidding, so after a pause he said :

"Do you remember that I owed your father money ?"

"All the world owes my father money ; it would be singular if you did not."

"You make light of it, and so did I—foolishly perhaps ; but at least I fancied that the loan was to help me to fame, not to dash me to the ground while I was climbing."

"What do you mean ?" Daria asked, leaning forward in her chair, her eyes on his face.

"Only what I am told is an old story, Señora ; one day the money was claimed and immediate payment demanded by a man to whom my debt had been transferred."

"My father did this ?" the Jewess asked, in a voice which was terribly calm and distinct.

"Possibly not your father himself; his servants or clerks certainly did it."

"It is the same," Daria exclaimed with scorn ; "you need make no excuse. My father knows every detail of the tortures of his victims—*nothing* is done without his orders."

"But it meant ruin to me, and your father only ruins his enemies—or so he said once ; I am an insignificant enemy."

"You do not understand," Daria said bitterly. "Tell me what happened. Did you appeal to him ?"

"I could not ; he refused to see me. I saw my creditor, who was inexorable, and then——"

"Your creditor ? What was his name ?"

"Hellmann."

"I do not know it—how should I? I know few of my father's tools. Well, he was inexorable you say, 'and then'?"

"And then I came to you."

All Daria's face softened, her dignity was forgotten for the moment, she showed her love like a young girl.

"You came to me? You would have let me help you, as I once asked? And I was away, and could not—could not, though I would gladly. What did you do?"

A constraint was over Rupert's tone and manner as he explained.

"I applied to a friend in England, and he came to the rescue."

"So you are safe? Are you quite sure? Is the debt paid?"

"The debt is paid, Señora," Rupert answered gloomily.

"But it has made you doubtful of the future, is it not so? You have no guarantee that this terror may not be held over you again. You are right, for I will tell you something."

She came near to him and laid her two hands clasped on his arm.

"Do you know why my father hates you?" she asked suddenly.

Rupert started; the word hate was so strong, and yet so ominously true, spoken by Daria's lips.

"No; I have done him no wrong."

"Are you sure? Has not the Jew a daughter? And are you not a Christian, Rupert van Hals? Did you not come,—long, long ago as it seems to

me,—and willingly or unwillingly, win that daughter's love, and then—hush ! let me finish—then when the Jew had well-nigh resolved that he would sacrifice his pride of race and creed, and let his child mate with one whom he scorned, then did you not point to the barrier you yourself had raised between them —your English wife ! "

" Daria ! you are cruel," Van Hals said hoarsely ; " it was you who raised a barrier, you who gave me no hope, you——"

" Let us think so, at least," the Jewess said, laying her hand on his mouth, and pointing to her cousin at the piano ; " *I* do not quarrel with you, I do not even say I regret ; but with my father it is different. He loves me as miserable men love the one thing they care for on earth ; for my happiness—as he pictures it—he would stoop to take a Christian for his son. You cannot understand all that means to a Jew and a Spaniard like my father ; if you could you would not wonder that he seeks revenge ; but you would be amazed as I am that his revenge takes so poor a form."

Van Hals would have spoken, but she interrupted him.

" Do not answer me," she said sadly ; " I have told you more than many women would, and now I am going to ask you to give me a promise."

" You can ask nothing I will refuse," Rupert said.

" If my father tries to ruin you again, and I cannot think he will let himself be defeated, come to me. Ask me for any sum and I will give it you—it is the only way you can make me happy, now."

" Indeed, Señora, you are good ; but I owe

him nothing—he can claim no debt that does not exist."

"Do not be too confident; you may have forgotten. You do not understand these terrible loans; some day you may need my help, and then let me be sure you will come."

"I promise," Rupert said, with a sad smile. "All my pride is gone, I think, since I consent to take money from a woman."

He seemed as if he would have said more, but she turned from him rather quickly, and noting the hour, said:

"Leave me now, my father may come in, and I would not have you meet."

But the smile with which she dismissed him faded when she was alone, and she looked worn and tired.

"That is enough music for to-night, my cousin," she said a little petulantly; "my father is due, and he hates music, and for that matter I sometimes think I do too. You had better read your book in another room; your uncle may have something to tell me after my absence."

The Spaniard, some years younger than her imperious cousin, was much afraid of her uncle, and needed no second bidding to avoid a chance of meeting him.

When her father came Daria received him with the peculiar haughtiness of manner for which she was noted, but which she seldom adopted to the Jew himself.

"And so your paltry plan has failed, my father!" Leon's daughter cried, with scornful lips; "and you have sent for me in hot haste from Spain to tell me

that the creature you would have crushed has crept from under your foot. As if a poor sum like that would ruin a man!"

"The hot haste was yours, daughter," Leon answered, concealing the pain his child's words gave him. He knew that the moment had come when she must choose between himself and Van Hals, and knew too how her choice would go, and yet it hurt him to see her array her powers on the enemy's side. "I merely said you could return when you would. In how many hours after receiving my message at your uncle's house had you left Spain, Daria?"

"I do not conceal that I am interested in my friend," the Jewess said, a little less proudly; "I knew you would attack him in some way, but I did not dream of such a common plot. But the scheme failed, apparently?"

"Apparently."

"Well, we need not discuss the subject. Only I have one thing to say, I will take no part in your vengeance. Van Hals position is his misfortune and mine—it is his wife's fault; toward her my revenge turns, not to him. And, my father, forgive me, but I wish you clearly to understand that for our friendship's sake I have promised, whatever complications may arise, I will help my friend. You best know your daughter's fortune; she will sacrifice it all rather than see the man who has trusted her injured."

It was not a prudent speech, but when a woman defends the man she loves, she casts prudence to the winds, and Daria Leon was not at much pains to wear a mask before her father.

Leon looked at her strangely.

"I can conceive complications in which your boasted wealth would be powerless to help this or any other man whom I hate," he said, rising as he spoke and moving to the door.

The Jew's chin was bent on his breast, he walked slowly, as if pondering deeply; he raised the heavy portière with one hand, dropped it, and came back to his daughter.

"To you, Daria, it is but too evident that my actions have but one motive. I send you away—you deem it is on one man's account, and you are right; it does not, however, follow that when I bid you return it is again because of one man's fate. Since you left events have happened which to me outweigh the fate of many sculptors. The mystic diamond is in my possession."

"And you sent to me for this?" cried Daria, her impulsive nature urging her into strong reaction, and her love for her father taking more than its old place in her breast. "And I misjudged you, I scorned and accused you. Oh, forgive your Daria!"

She clasped his knees with passionate pleading, but Leon put her from him gently.

"We will not talk of misjudging," he said coldly; "no judgment—even yours—would turn me from my settled course. The diamond is in my hands, and the fateful chain is complete in its sixfold link—you should be happy, Daria!"

It was curious to see a man with a greed for gain which led him to set at defiance on occasion the laws of God and man, at once the slave of a superstition at which a child might smile, and ready to sacrifice

his most cherished schemes for one look of love from the daughter he adored.

"How did you get the stone, my father?" Daria asked.

Leon moved away from her caressing hands, before he answered.

"Herr van Hals brought it to me."

"He brought it! father. How? How did he know you wanted the diamond?"

"He was in difficulties through a mistake of Simon's,"—Leon knew his child did not believe the fiction but he held to it firmly,—"and he applied to a friend in England, who sent him some diamonds to sell—among them mine."

Daria looked incredulous.

"It is true he told me he wrote to an English friend," she murmured, below her breath. "Then, my father, you were mistaken—the diamond was not here in Amsterdam, after all?"

"Apparently not."

"Again 'apparently'! Father, you speak in riddles!"

"Riddles are often in the ears of the hearer," the Jew said, with a strange look.

"Your diamond brought by Van Hals; I cannot understand!" Daria was uneasy, but she could not tell why; an undefined change in Rupert's manner for which she had failed to account, seemed to link itself in her mind with her father's assertion that he received the yellow diamond from the sculptor.

"Are you sure it is yours?" the Jewess cried, catching at what seemed a gleam of light on the matter.

"Yes, I am sure."

"Perhaps there is another of the stones in the diamond works here; your information seemed certain that one had arrived there."

"Perhaps."

"I cannot understand it; I do not think I ever shall," Daria said, perplexed by her father's manner, and by his unexpected story.

"Yes, you will understand some day," her father said slowly, his dark eyes fixed gloomily on her changing face. "You will know all, and the knowledge will give pain, as most knowledge does. I remember,"—and as the Jew spoke he passed his hand across his furrowed brow, smoothing the wrinkles which gathered again as wrinkles will for all our smoothing,—"I remember standing by my mother's knee asking questions about some of life's puzzles, until, as she answered me, I exclaimed that I wished I knew all she knew. I remember how the tears came to her eyes,—and my mother did not shed many tears,—as she told me that all knowledge was gained by toil and sorrow. She watched me, my grand old mother, to see if I would cling to knowledge still in spite of what lay between me and it, and when I told her I could bear pain, but could not endure ignorance, she smiled and said that for me there was a great future if I cared to take it. I am more timid than she, Daria. If I could I would spare you all knowledge that could pain you, even though I knew that after it would come joy."

Daria took her father's hand in silence. It was so rare for Leon to speak as he had just spoken, that no one but his daughter would have deemed it possible that the hard-featured Jew should linger over the

memory of his dead wife, or think of any other gain than gain of gold.

As the Jewess sat thinking over all she had heard, she applied her father's words about painful knowledge, to grief she would feel at some evil deed of his, and began to wonder if he had compelled Van Hals to procure the diamond.

She remembered that Leon had warned her that he expected to regain possession of it. Could it be possible that he had prompted Van Hals to take it, and so redeem his debt?

But what opportunity could the sculptor have had of entering the diamond works, whence Daria was convined the stone had been brought? And even if opportunity was forthcoming, what bribe could Leon offer before Van Hals would run so great a risk?

To the Spanish woman's mind, one bribe alone was adequate, and that bribe was herself; and for a moment she let herself dream of this possibility before she remembered Rupert's wife. Her existence made all Daria's surmises an absurdity, and her face darkened as she thought how poor all vengeance was that left Myrtle unharmed. There was but one way to wound her, as Leon's daughter had decided long ago, and that way was to steal her husband's love. If the mystic diamond was to bring joy to Daria, it must be by enabling her to work Myrtle sorrow, and as the Jewess thought over her last interview with Van Hals, she believed that this evil joy would at last be hers. He cared for her more than ever, she was sure; she had but to flatter him a little, to fill his mind with her beauty and his heart with her love, and the poison would do its work.

A loving wife would not fail to learn that she was not in her husband's thoughts; Myrtle would know she had a rival, and some day Daria would let her see who that rival was.

She rose quickly, carried away by her thoughts, and dropped her father's hand. Leon looked wistfully at her.

"Was there not a Roman once who slew his daughter?" he said, hardly above a whisper; "slew her to save her from a fate worse than death. The Jews have great traditions; a Jew ought to dare what a Roman dared,—but such deeds are prompted by the rush of young blood, and I am getting old—old, Daria."

And, muttering to himself as old men mutter, Leon went back to his own room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DARIA need not have feared lest her poisoned arrow should fail to do its work.

If Myrtle's sorrow was her chosen vengeance, she was avenged already. For Rupert's wife had long known that she was a burden to her husband, and if she had not loved him too well to be suspicious, she might have trembled at his waning affection.

She watched him in these days in much perplexity. He seemed changed even in a week; and showed a strange interest in Kranz, whom formerly he never mentioned. For, of course, Myrtle heard from Esther of Jan's return, and could give Van Hals all the details. Here lay his only fear. As he questioned Myrtle, her

husband felt he was safe ; for Jan seemed to have forgotten everything that had taken place in his absence, and (warned by Leon) only told Esther that he had been drinking.

"What will he do for a living?" asked Rupert.

"They have taken him on again at the works, I believe. Esther says they made some difficulty about it, but Leon interceded for him, and they have taken him back."

"Leon interceded?"

"Yes ; it was through Leon's influence that he got work there at first ; they say he is very good to poor Jews."

"It is the first time I have heard of his being good to anyone," said Rupert bitterly ; "but I am glad Kranz has gone back, if it is only to remove that ghastly dog from our door. I suppose now it will haunt us no longer."

"Esther is glad," Myrtle went on, thankful for her husband's sympathy in anything she cared about, "for she was naturally uneasy at her brother-in-law's long absence. There has been a rumor at the works that some diamonds were missing, and for a time she feared Kranz might have had a hand in taking them."

"Very likely he had," said her husband, getting up from his seat ; this was not a subject he cared to pursue.

"No, it seems not. An overseer or manager has absconded, and the principals think that is a confession of guilt."

"How very fortunate!" said Rupert hastily—"for Kranz, I mean."

"It is a dangerous place for a man like Kranz to

work in," Myrtle said thoughtfully; "the temptation is continually before him to purloin a few very small diamonds—he might fancy they would hardly be missed, and in time he could accumulate quite a little store."

Rupert laughed rather harshly, a laugh of uneasiness.

"You think lightly of such a man's temptations, Rupert," his wife said gently; "but though you cannot believe it possible that a few uncut stones could tempt a man, I can, dear, and I can pity him."

"God bless you for that pity, my wife," Van Hals said quickly, and stooped and kissed her wondering upturned face.

Then he left her, and tears sprang to her eyes for joy at her husband's rare kiss.

She little knew how he longed for her pity just then, nor how his good angel impelled him to tell her all.

But such moods were rare with Van Hals; oftener the remembrance of his theft made him reckless, and he preferred to lull care by forgetfulness rather than to slay it by confession. He was constantly with Daria Leon. The presence of men made him gloomy and uneasy; so he avoided evenings with his art friends where the talk was apt to be of the last poem, the successful picture, the new singer of the year. Such things might interest but could not distract him; but at dinners and balls and receptions, with a beautiful woman by his side, with perpetual gay talk, music and laughter, admiration and flattery, Rupert van Hals sometimes contrived to forget. Above all he succeeded in Daria's presence. He was the lion of

the season in Amsterdam that year, and it was becoming quite natural to see by the side of the popular sculptor the lady who had made him her *protégé*.

The world of art might know that his statue of Leon's daughter would mar rather than make his reputation, but the world of fashion did not know yet, or did not care. Orders came in fast for small statuettes, or heads, and at present Van Hals need not run into debt.

So the husband lived in a whirl of work and pleasure, and the wife lived at home and knew herself forgotten.

As the summer came on Myrtle had a new cause for anxiety. Amsterdam was enduring a month of that early fierce heat, which often visits a Northern clime on its way to the South. The sun, like all young forces, expends its strength with a merciless, untiring energy, very different from its lazy languor in its Southern home. It is a stranger, and only half-welcome ; it glares on the indignant country, unsoftened by haze, unshaded by foliage, and is reflected from the canal surfaces with a glitter which makes water look like brass. The people oppose it from the first ; they do not know how to deal with the intruder, but they will not let it interrupt them ; so they work through its hottest hours, put aside none of their habits of food or strong drink, and after exhausting themselves by a vain struggle all day, they sit out in the evening when at last the enemy has departed, and never note that their canals and their dank vegetations are giving off long white streaks of vapor which are fatal to those who breathe them. The water in the canals was as low as in autumn—if it had been autumn

the city would have been comparatively deserted, but it was early summer, the most fashionable time of the season, and people waited for the heat to cease, and meanwhile fever came.

As yet it was not known in the better streets, but it raged in the Jews' quarter and in the older part of the town, and Myrtle's child was one of the first to droop.

He had no particular ailment, but his languid eyes told their own story, and his heavy head was constantly on his mother's shoulder. Myrtle took a sudden resolution.

"Rupert," she said, a little timidly, "I should like to take the boy home."

"Home? Do you mean to your mother's?"

"Yes; I am afraid of him. Look at that water," and she pointed to the canal where the boat had been moored on the night of the diamond robbery. "Every time a barge passes I shut the windows; soon the water will be too low for any boat, and we shall have a fever."

Rupert thought for a few minutes; it seemed to Myrtle that he was relieved by her plan.

"Yes, you shall go, Myrtle," he said; "it will be best, and we will give up these rooms. While you are away I will have a bed put up at the studio, and when you come back, I may be rich."

"Oh, Rupert, do not talk as if I should be so long away as that!" cried his wife, a little sad at heart that he took her going so easily; "I would not go at all, but for the child."

"Well, write at once—or I will telegraph to Harvey."

"No! no, a letter will do—they are out of the way of telegrams. I need not wait for an answer, I can

say I am following the letter without delay. Rupert," Myrtle whispered, laying her tired head for a moment against his cheek, "you are not glad I am going?"

"Of course not, silly child, except for your own sake. I wish I could get out of this pestilent city as easily!"

He spoke lightly, but his words smote even on his own ears with a chill, and he knew well enough they were not what Myrtle wanted. For alas! he was glad she was going, and he feared she would read it in his face. She did read it, but she thought only that her presence was a check upon his pleasure; she could not dream that it was a reminder of his guilt.

So it was settled that Myrtle should take her boy to Devonshire, and she wrote to Harvey that night. But the next day the child was in a high fever, and Dr. Isencraw said it would be dangerous to move him. His mother nursed him alone, for Rupert was easily persuaded to carry out his plan of sleeping at the studio, and it was better for the sick child that the bedroom at home should be turned as much into a hospital as possible. Dr. Isencraw called daily and taught the poor mother how to keep the house as cool as such a house could be kept; but when she looked out at the dirty crowding buildings which seemed to shut out all air from the back windows, and then turned to the fever-breeding canal in front, she longed for one breath of purity from Red Hill Farm. For the first time she talked to Isencraw of her old home, her soft voice seeming to soothe the child, while by means of a gently tilted saucer she kept the linen bandages wet and cool that bound the little burning head.

And the doctor, knowing how safe she was in her

love for her child and its father, let himself worship in silence this sweet English woman whom he loved. Sometimes he found himself picturing her in other surroundings, but it was in a quiet way of his own, and it could not have hurt an angel, he said ; only as he went back to his lonely home, and remembered how he had first seen Myrtle in Rupert's arms at his own door, he said a few sharp short words about cowards which he would have been glad for the sculptor to hear.

Rupert came daily to see his son, but he was not anxious ; childish ailments seemed very trifling to an indifferent father ; and Rupert had from the first regarded his child as a burden, and postponed showing any affection for it until it should be older. Isencraw did not speak of danger, and Myrtle's anxiety, of which she did not confess the whole to Van Hals, seemed to him rather an instinctive maternal weakness than any criterion of the child's state.

A week passed, the heat continued, and Esther brought terrible accounts of the state of the Jews' quarter.

One day Dr. Isencraw had not been to see the child. Myrtle knew that he could do nothing more than had been done ; all that remained was to watch nature and follow the simple directions the doctor had given ; but Isencraw's presence comforted her, and she felt depressed and desolate alone. Rupert had been in for a few minutes in the morning, but he expected two important sitters and would be hard at work all day.

"Will you come in in the evening?" his wife said wistfully.

"I cannot tell," Rupert answered, with an air as if

the matter involved serious consequences ; "there is an important reception to-night, and I ought to be present ; these social gatherings are so many openings which a man who would rise ought to seize."

As night drew on the boy fell into a sort of stupor, which alarmed Myrtle more than the feverish symptoms which had preceded it, because she no longer knew what to do. She took the child's hand as it lay on the coverlet and tried to count the feeble pulse-beats. She could trace against her fingers perhaps twenty, and then they stopped, or rather died away gradually, and then after a terrible pause, during which her own heart-throbs shook her hand, they began again, faint as the flutter of an insect's wing, to increase and then to fail as before. To the lonely mother it seemed as though these pulse beatings were the boy's footsteps as he was induced by some angel of death to leave her side, and that just as he got beyond her reach he faltered and turned back. Whose entreaty would prevail over the little year-old wanderer between two worlds, his mother's or the angel's ?

Their neighbor from upstairs, the kind wife of the short-hand teacher, crept down to make her last inquiry before leaving Myrtle alone for the night, and the alarm on her face deepened Myrtle's fear.

"I must go for the doctor," she said quickly. "Will you wait by my child just for an hour? You have been so good to me, and I have no one else to ask, and I dare not go through the night like this."

"Yes, my dear, I will wait," the woman said, and Myrtle knew from her offering no opposition to her proposal that she thought seriously of the boy's case.

The night was very dark ; heavy thunder clouds hid the stars, not a breath of air was to be felt, one almost longed for a storm.

It was past midnight when Myrtle left the house. She had never been alone in the streets at such an hour, and for a moment she wondered if she should wait for a chance of Rupert's return. But she knew it was hopeless to expect him so late ; after the reception of which he had spoken he would go back to the studio ; she must depend upon herself only.

She chose quiet streets and hurried on, walking as quickly as her limbs, stiff and weak after the weary watching beside her child, would let her. Now and then she tried to run, but she fancied she lost ground after each effort, and gave this up. It was a long way to Dr. Isencraw's house, but she knew no other doctor, and her English prejudice made her distrust any foreigner whose skill she had not proved.

Suddenly, as she crossed a bridge, a man sprang out of the shadow cast by the parapet and caught her by both hands. Weak as she was, trembling with the mere effort of walking, any struggle would have been useless ; she looked this way and that, but not a creature was in sight.

"Do not be afraid," the man said, with a laugh ; "you are much too beautiful to be out alone ; I will take care of you."

He spoke like a gentleman, as far as tone of voice and choice of words went, and Myrtle turned her eyes full upon his.

"Afraid !" she said, with a ring of scorn in her words. "I have a child dying at home—do you think any man on earth could make me afraid ?"

Her assailant loosed her hands, and fell back into the shadow, sobered at once and awed by the look in her eyes; and Myrtle went quickly on her way.

But the incident had shaken her nerve; she started at forms that loomed uncertainly in the darkness, and every distant shout of home-returning revelers made her heart beat wildly. She determined to turn into some of the better streets, where the lights in the houses were not all extinguished, where late parties gave life to the dead night hour, and where patroling police would be more likely to afford her protection.

She pressed on quickly, stilling her fear with thoughts of her child's need, and walking under the shade of the trees by the water's edge, where such a faint breeze as might be felt in this purer part of the city fanned her cheek and renewed her strength.

In front of her was a crowd of carriages, and round the door of a great house she could hear the shouts of servants calling to coachmen, the clatter of horses' hoofs on the rough pavement, and the banging of doors as each party of guests drove away. She would have avoided the crowd, but to go back now would delay her greatly, and after all no one knew her in this fashionable quarter of the city.

But as she reached the door a flood of light and warmth seemed to fall across her path, merry voices and laughter greeted her ear. Dazzled and bewildered, she shrank back into the shadow.

A lady came out of the house to her carriage. The lights glimmered on the sheen of white satin, and diamonds flashed in her black hair. But Myrtle saw nothing but her face, and that she would never forget, for it was the face of Daria Leon. The man on whose

arm she leaned spoke to her, and though Myrtle could not catch the words, she knew her husband's voice, and for the moment she forgot everything except that Rupert was there, and that the beautiful Jewess was by his side.

Myrtle stood as if she had been carved in stone; her face was pale as marble, her hand held a shawl across her chest.

As Daria took her seat in the carriage, her eyes fell on this woman who stood in the shade, but on whose face and figure a white reflected light shone feebly.

Something in her attitude was familiar to the Jewess; she looked again, and like a revelation it flashed upon her that this grave, sad face was the face of Rupert's wife, as he had modeled her with the doves clasped to her breast.

This was the woman she hated, and fate had put revenge in her power. With that cruelty which one woman can use to another, she leaned forward for a moment and turned her dreamy Spanish eyes to Van Hal's face; she looked at him as women look at the man they love only, and her curved lips formed one word: Rupert!

Myrtle saw it, as the Jewess knew she would, and listened, with strained intentness, for her husband's reply. It came soon enough. Van Hals bent his head until his lips touched Daria's hand. "Good-night," he whispered; but Myrtle heard—"Good-night, my queen!"

Then the carriage drove away, and Van Hals ran lightly up the steps into the house; and other horses pranced in the half light, their reckless Dutch drivers cracking their whips, and making them turn on the

narrow curbless pavement, careless of the one silent woman who threaded her way among the crowding vehicles without ever lifting her head, protected only by that pitying Providence which sometimes cares for those who have no care for themselves.

But the lights faded and the shouts died away at last, and Myrtle saw before her an open space, and against a rift in the sky the sails of a great windmill, while between her and it was the gleam of gray water. She was close to Isencraw's house now, and her journey was almost over. Soon she could see the light which was always kept burning just under the brass bowl which marked his grandfather's trade.

She pulled the night bell and waited, but when the doctor himself opened the door and drew her into the house, she could not for a time tell her errand, but could only cry, with panting sobs, "I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it!"

"You cannot bear what?" asked Isencraw gently.

But Myrtle read suspicion in the doctor's face, and with wifely instinct put that sorrow by. She had two griefs, but only one could be told to human ears.

"The boy is worse," she said.

"And you came for me? all this way, and alone? Where is Van Hals?"

"He—does not know."

"I will come at once," Isencraw said, without further comment; and putting up some medicines he went to the door. Turning again to look at Myrtle, he prepared a draught which he made her take, and then offered her his arm in silence.

"We must walk some distance, I fear. It is difficult to get any conveyance at this hour, but when we

get into the fashionable streets we may find a cab waiting on late dances. Did you walk all the way?"

"Yes; it was late, as you say, and cabs are very dear so late as this."

Something in her reply seemed to vex Isencraw, and the two walked on in silence, until the doctor saw a coachman he knew, and bribed him to give up an order and take them to Myrtle's house.

The boy lay much as his mother had left him, and Isencraw saw there was little hope of so frail a life fighting on much longer.

"There will be no change until morning," he said gravely. "To-morrow he may pull round. But to-morrow, if there is a change for the better, all your strength will be needed. I promise not to leave him, and you must sleep. You can trust him to me?"

The woman who had watched by the boy took Myrtle to the sofa in the other room, and Dr. Isencraw sat up all night.

There was nothing to be done, except from time to time to give such medicine as he thought best to the dying child.

"She has had a shock," he said to himself as he stepped from the boy's bedside to where Myrtle lay moaning in her sleep, with her eyelids only half closed over her strangely fixed eyes. "A shock of no far distant date, and probably caused in some way by her husband. He is weak, lamentably weak, and some men would pity him; I think the time has come in the world's history when the weak ought to be punished. They do more harm than strong sinners, in my experience!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT was the morning after; salutary, unwelcome, truth-revealing morning.

Night's artificial lights no longer made mere glitter tell like gold, or paint like flesh tints, or paste like real gems.

Night's transient ardor no longer dressed mere profession in friendship's garb, or called selfishness love, or vanity generosity, or boasting courage.

In the palace-like mansion where Rupert and Daria had met, daylight fell coldly on the traces of the night's past splendor.

The wax candles which had shed such luster on the assembled guests had flared in their sconces and injured the silk paneled walls; scarlet flowers had been trodden into delicate curtain borders; the freshness had passed from everything, the feast was now only fragments.

And two of the guests, at least, awoke to the consciousness that to most actions of our lives there are two aspects, and that it is the one which we can see only when we look back that is most likely to trouble our memories.

When Daria thought next morning of the events of the night before, it was with a regret for her own conduct very rare with the proud Jewess. She was not sorry that she had wounded Myrtle van Hals, but she wished she could have done so without the presence of Myrtle's husband.

For Daria loved the handsome sculptor well enough to read every shadow of change that crossed his mind,

and she knew that while Rupert's lips did her homage, he had uncrowned her in his heart. So long as an impassable gulf was between them, Van Hals, manlike, desired to cross it; Daria might refer to it, even regret it, and hold her place as queen in his eyes, but as soon as she threw so much as a silken thread across it, she became the seeker, and in that instant ceased to be sought. And this the Spanish woman knew; and the triumph of her revenge was marred by the thought that the very look which stabbed the wife, alienated the husband. Still in these matters something must always be risked, and the beauty smiled as she mentally rehearsed her next meeting with the sculptor, when a little haughtiness of manner would soon remove her to the inaccessible pedestal on which he liked to contemplate his goddess.

Meanwhile Van Hals, tools in hand and pipe in mouth, sat before an unfinished work in his studio. His chisel had not struck a blow that morning. For him, too, the glamour of evening had passed, and "color seen by candle-light" would "not bear the light of day."

"I know she loves me, poor darling!" Rupert said, half aloud, throwing himself back in a lounging chair, while a conscious smile played about his mouth; "but I am sorry she was foolish last night; it spoils our platonic friendship, and lowers her to the level of ordinary worshiping womankind! Strange that I could have such a creature as Daria at my feet, while my wife is cold—cold as this stone!" And Van Hals sprang up and struck his chisel with such irritation and petulance, that he cut deeper than the points indicated, and threw the offending tool from him into the furthest corner of the room.

Just then a knock at the door was followed by the entrance of Isencraw.

"Great God!" cried Van Hals, recalled to himself by the sight of the doctor's grave face, "I had forgotten the child."

"You will not have a child long to remember," Isencraw said bitterly, for no man can judge his brother, and Rupert's avoidance of his home was to him only explainable in one way, and he little knew the heartsoreness which the weak, popular artist wore under his soft clothing; "I did not come to speak about the child, but about the mother."

"Myrtle? What of her?"

"She is ill," the doctor answered pitilessly—"ill, and she will not own it. She has had a severe mental shock, and I cannot find out the cause. Do you know anything about it?"

"She was well yesterday—of that I am sure. She is only anxious about the boy, Isencraw—she sets such store by him."

"Naturally," the doctor said dryly. "Where were you last night?"

"At a reception. Why?"

"Only that your wife came to my house long after midnight, alone, and on foot, because the boy was worse, and she had no one to send."

The look which Isencraw cast round the luxurious studio aroused Rupert's antagonism.

"That probably accounts for her illness," he said irritably. "What it has to do with my being out at a reception of which I had told her, giving her my reasons for going, I do not see! She herself agreed it was best for me to be away from home while the

boy was ill, and in fact she was going to England if this fever had not prevented her."

"England is the best place for her. As soon—well, as soon as you can, I should send her there; that house is in a poisonous quarter."

"You need not tell me that; a poor man cannot choose where he will live."

"No?" questioned Isencraw, with a repetition of the glance which galled Rupert. "I will not stay and keep you here; it was my duty to come and warn you about your wife."

Van Hals picked up his tools, with the air of a man who has been disturbed at a critical moment, and turned to his work, not heeding Isencraw's rather constrained leave-taking. But it needed only this news of his wife's illness to complete his quarrel with the world and with himself. Everything was wrong. For some time he had been in a labyrinth, where the next turn was to be the one which would show the way out of his difficulties, and now he was beginning to doubt the wisdom of many of his last moves.

Another knock at the door irritated him beyond endurance.

"If it is Isencraw——" he muttered.

It was not Isencraw, but a small, neat Dutchman, with a shaven face, which seemed formed on the principle of the compensating balance; for a pertly turned up nose was atoned for by a preternaturally long top lip, and a singular elevation of the outer corner of the eyebrows was contrasted with so marked a downward tendency of the corners of the mouth that it seemed almost produced by art. This was the more likely because the profession of the little Dutchman was one

in which seriousness was more becoming than levity, for he was a police officer.

He entered the studio ceremoniously, and, closing the door, began at once to explain his errand. For some time he spoke to indifferent, because inattentive, ears ; but at last, as he came more to the point, Van Hals started as if he had been shot, and, striking his hand sharply against the little statuette on which he was working so that it lay broken on the floor, he muttered with white lips the single word : "Betrayed ! "

"You do not want to ask any questions, I suppose, sir ? " asked the intruder, after a silence.

"No. Stay ! Who arrests me ? "

"I do, sir," answered the officer, his long upper lip drawn down to indicate sympathy.

"Of course, fool, I know that—but at whose instigation ? "

"At the instigation, or rather on the deposition of, Herr Leon, money-lender, to whom, I believe, you offered the diamond."

"Ha ! but he took it and paid for it—he cannot prosecute after that, I imagine ? " And the wretched sculptor looked appealingly at the man beside him.

"He did not pay you half the value, I believe that's it ; anyway, he has made himself safe, depend upon it ; he always does."

Van Hals strode from one end of the room to the other, like a caged animal, and the little man moved warily to the door.

"Look here," he cried, stopping suddenly, "I did not steal the stones ; I found them, found them in a drunkard's pocket."

"Finding's keeping!" said the other, his grave lip relaxing its tension, and the merry half of his face asserting its supremacy; "but's keeping's stealing, all the world over! You were not bound to keep the stones, you see—any more than if you'd found them on your own doorstep," he added, with an unconscious touch of truth. "If you found them in a drunkard's pocket (and did not put them there first yourself), produce your drunkard as a witness, and make him swear to the contents of his pocket. And as he is not likely to do this sober, you'd better make him drunk again."

After which sally the twinkle in the man's eyes died out suddenly, as if you had blown out a candle, and the long lip drew itself down painfully.

"What is the usual form in these cases?" Rupert asked, throwing some papers into a drawer and locking it. He began to see that if he intended to make a defense, this was not the place to make it.

"Theft?" asked the small officer carelessly. "Why, prison of course. You are lucky; you will be examined to-morrow without any waiting."

"Very well. I am ready."

The man looked round, and took a light dust-coat of Paris cut from the nail where it hung.

"You will like to do things quietly. Put this on, and you will not be noticed."

"Fool!" cried Van Hals, "put the coat down, and call a cab."

The officer went to the door, opened it for a second, and then returned to Rupert's side. A heavy tramp down the passage reminded Van Hals that he was securely guarded, and for a moment forced him to realize his position.

The cab was soon at the door.

"Have you any friends to whom you'd wish to drop a note?" the man who took the lead asked.

"Not one," was the bitter answer, as Van Hals took his place in the cab, and threw himself back in the dark of the corner.

The little man sat beside him, a strongly built and warder-like person got on the box by the coachman, and they drove away.

Once as they halted for the raising of a bridge, Van Hals caught sight of a friend, an artist like himself, standing lazily in the sun watching the crowd. Just for one brief moment Rupert felt an irrepressible impulse to call him, as though he had a right to ask for help; then a rushing tide of horror seemed to sweep over him, and he remembered that he was no guiltless prisoner who could cry for justice, but a thief who must ask for mercy, if he would escape his fate.

For the next half hour his brain seemed turned to stone; he had no power to think. He repeated sentences without meaning, to the beat of the horses' hoofs and the rattle of the closed windows.

When he came to himself he was in a bare room, whitewashed everywhere, and clean with a sort of aggressive cleanliness which Van Hals resented.

The sun poured in at a small window, and the white walls reflected the white rays mercilessly on the prisoner's face. There was no shadow anywhere, and Rupert wanted darkness. He sat down by a wooden table, and buried his face in his hands.

The struggle was over. Leon had ruined him. St—! Was it Leon after all? Could Leon's darkest l— have put him here, but for his own deed?

What a fool he had been! A short-sighted, weak, miserable fool! Was it possible that that debt—which now, looked at from the depth of this despair, seemed nothing to crush a man—had so warped and twisted him—him, Rupert Van Hals—as to make of him a common thief? Leon had set a trap for him, and while he thought to escape from that which would have given but a skin-scratch, he had branded himself with a mark which would last his life.

He wondered he did not beat his head against the walls of his prison in wild despair; but though he wondered at himself, he was calm enough. Life for him seemed dead already, killed with the blow which struck ambition down, and bade him never look for fame again. Eating, drinking, sleeping was not life; and for him there was nothing else. There was nothing left to kill.

Van Hals sat without moving; perhaps for hours; and the glare faded from the whitewashed walls and left them dead and gray. Food was brought to him, but he did not touch it, nor speak to him who brought it. And in the evening a man came,—some official of the prison,—and told him he would be taken before the magistrate in the morning, but Van Hals did not lift his head.

"Have you any friend to whom you would like to send word of your position?" the official asked, kindly enough.

"Of this position? No."

"I mean, sir, who might advise you about your defense."

The answer came as before, measured, without hurry or petulance, only full of weariness: "No."

Then the man left him alone again, to think.

But he could not think much or collectedly. The mental strain was producing great fatigue. He lay down just as he was, in his coat and boots, on a bed in the corner of the room, absolutely apathetic. He felt like a man who has heard of some terrible shipwreck, far out on a distant sea, and because it is so far away fails to realize the pain of his fellow-creatures in their drifting boats; again and again he reproached himself for a sort of callous numbness of sensibility which seemed inhuman, but the man he would fain have pitied was too far removed from him to rouse more than a faint interest. He remembered reading of prisoners,—common thieves or drunken murderers,—that they heard their sentence with "hardened indifference," or left the dock "with brazen faces." Now he knew what that meant. He knew that he must so stand on that terrible morrow that was coming, curbing himself to stony calm, or he should go mad. At last he slept.

The pitiless summer morning awoke him, to the white vault-like walls, and to a sharp, bitter remembrance of what had befallen him.

For the first time he ventured to let his mind dwell on his wife. He had done well not to summon her, he thought. Better silence than cruel speech, and ignorance than bitter knowledge. She might be a little anxious at not hearing from him, but—and her husband was ashamed, at last, as he acknowledged it—she would only fancy he was engrossed in some arrangement of pleasure; and the child would take all her thoughts, and Isencraw would not let her want.

She must know in the end, and then—then she

would go home to Red Hill Farm, and all the happy days of their early love would be as if they had not been.

And Van Hals felt the hot tears burn through his tightening fingers, as he pressed his hands against his eyes, and for one moment let himself live over in memory his life in Devonshire.

Yes—she must know.

For there was no defense; of that he had no doubt. What defense could he urge? Poverty? Overmastering temptation? Old pleas, but useless! What would he have thought of them a year ago, or of a man in his position using them?

No, he had no defense.

Would it help him to speak of Kranz? He did not know. Was the punishment less severe for a suddenly executed than for a long-planned crime? or, if two shared the guilt did they divide the penalty? Again he did not know. But one thing he knew, that he would never put this to the test. Low he had stooped already, but here he would hold his hand; he was but a common thief, let him keep a common thief's virtue, and scorn to betray a companion.

After all there was but to-morrow, and then after preliminaries long or short, and mental torture more or less severe, all would be over. Suddenly, as he looked at the four bare walls of his room, he started to his feet with a loud cry. No, it would not be over! He would be brought back, imprisoned, for what length of time? months? years? He did not know.

"O God," he cried, "give me but one more chance!"

It was the old prayer of a weak man, who did not know that here, ready to hand, was his supreme chance ; the one way, thorny, and bristling with difficulty, by which his nature might attain the dignity of which it was yet capable, a dignity nobler than any he might win by rose-lined paths.

The police court was not crowded, as he had imagined, with morbid self-consciousness, by the curious of his own fashionable circle. As yet no one knew of his arrest. Leon was there, and Simon, but he saw no other faces that he knew.

He listened, while Simon told how the prisoner had offered diamonds for sale, and how, acting on previous orders from his master, he had taken him to Leon without examining the stones.

Then he heard Leon's rasping voice telling his story.

The Jew said the stone for the theft of which he prosecuted the prisoner was one of rare value, belonging to a set of diamonds which had been stolen from him years ago, and of which he had recovered many.

He said it was an octahedron from India, and explained how he could identify it ; and how, having reason to believe it was at a certain diamond cutter's in Amsterdam, his suspicions were aroused by the prisoner's account of his having obtained it from England. He apologized volubly, and as if he considered this the weak point in his case, for not accusing Van Hals on the spot; but excused himself on the plea of wanting absolute proof of the identity of the particular stone, before preferring so grave a charge. He had therefore given the prisoner what

he asked,—not half the value of the gem,—and had waited for certainty before making his accusation.

Then the head of the firm of diamond cutters in whose hands the stone had been deposited, swore that the diamond now in Leon's hands was given out by him to be re-cut on a certain date. It was, of course, missed in due time, but as his overseer had absconded he presumed he had stolen the stone, and took out writs for his apprehension. Whether he was in league with the prisoner or not, they could not say until the man was found, but in any case the stone was in the prisoner's possession, and could be sworn to.

"I never saw the overseer," came from Rupert's white, parched lips, as he listened, but only those near to him heard the protest. His dismayed look, as for the first time he heard of this mysterious third thief with whom he was supposed to be linked, and the evident perplexity in his face as he listened to his accusers, made many in court fancy he was the victim of a conspiracy, and they were disappointed when, on the usual opportunity for defense or denial given to him, he only shook his head, and turned without a word of protest to go back to his cell.

The absence of Jan Kranz bewildered him. He wondered why Leon had not produced this witness; surely he must know what evidence he could give.

Of course the Jew had his own reasons for keeping Kranz in the background. The man was his tool, and utterly in his power, for in case of his rebellion Leon could remind him of the small diamonds he had stolen on his own account. But tools may fail in the hands of the most skilled workman, may turn a

blunt edge when nothing but the finest blade could do the work required, or if their point be too keen may even pierce the hand that guides them.

Leon had a witness he had not hoped for in the principal of the diamond cutters. Now that the stone was in Leon's hands, this man could expect no further gain from standing by his original client, and the usurer of Amsterdam was known to pay those who served him in princely fashion, and by secret and delicate means, so that pride could not suffer. If the head of these world-famous diamond works would swear to the stone, Kranz was not needed.

Van Hals was not likely to produce him; if he did it was open to Leon either to suggest that the drunken diamond cutter was an intermediary between the overseer and Rupert, or that the prisoner had made Jan his agent. Had he not had dealings with him before, when he paid him to be his substitute in the conscription? And as Leon laid his plans, and prepared for every conceivable point of possible failure, he marveled how the enemy he hated had himself dug the pit into which he should be pushed.

"It is curious," he said to Simon, who did not share his chief's superstition about the fateful stone, "how the characteristics of the diamond run through this case. With all my skill at the polishing wheel, how could I cut that hardened stone, Van Hals, unless I ground him against his own dust?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE heavy heat-cloud which had brooded for weeks over Amsterdam broke at last in a rush of rain. The first shower was almost like a water-spout, and everywhere the wary townsmen were at their work, testing dykes and examining sluice-gates, lest the life-giving flood should find them unprepared. Children pattered with bare feet upon the cool wet stones, horses stood drinking in the fresh rain water at every pore of their dried-up skins, and careful housewives surrounded their doors with wide-mouthed bowls and pitchers so that none of the blessed moisture might be lost.

Anton Secker's cigar shop could hardly hold its crowding guests that evening. The rain drove men under cover, and yet everyone pressed as near the entrance as possible to hear the refreshing splash of water from each jutting point of the hooded doorway.

But although every newcomer had a word of rejoicing comment on the weather, it was evident that another subject was more engrossing than the happy rain and its effects on the fever returns.

"Curse the Jew dog!" muttered one man who was deeply in debt to Leon, "his fangs are always ready for a Christian throat; the whole thing is one of his plots."

"I am not so sure," said an artist, who showed his kinship with the sculptor chiefly by a little brotherly jealousy; "Van Hals has been terribly imprudent, not to say reckless."

"But if I hear right," interposed another, with a glance of some contempt at the last speaker, "it is hardly a question of imprudence. Taking charge of a rare diamond is rather more than reckless."

"If he did it," a good-natured man ventured.

"Well, he did not deny it—or so I am told. He let Leon swear away his honor, and never said a word."

Here there was a hubbub of voices, while warm friends and cold friends, jealous rivals and kind-hearted defenders of Van Hals, talked and disputed over the latest piece of scandal in the city, and told how the popular sculptor and gay companion now lay in prison, charged with theft by Leon the usurer.

In the midst of a hot discussion, a stout figure with slippered feet and soft plump hands which now patted an arm, and now rested for a moment on a shoulder, made slow way in and out of the gesticulating, smoking, arguing throng. It was Secker himself, his placid face grave and sorrowful, as he pointed significantly above his head, and whispered solemnly:

"Gentlemen, not so loud, I beg; no names, if you please, gentlemen; his wife is upstairs."

"His wife! good God, I had forgotten! His wife! why, that's your pretty niece, Anton. Poor thing! what will she do? And there's a child too—I am sure I heard there was a child!"

Anton nodded—a slow, solemn nod which became the occasion.

"There was a child; it died last night. The doctor brought the mother here this morning. She"—

and Secker laid his finger on his lip—"she does not know this!"

"Well, it is a mercy there is no child to bear the disgrace. I do not suppose the mother thinks that, yet. She does not know about her husband? How will you tell her, Anton?" were the various comments heard on all sides.

"Look here," one man said at last, "she cannot be rich, if it's true her husband was driven to theft. Poor Rupert! he was hard pressed before he did it, I'll swear! Get up a purse for her, Secker,—here's a start." And thrusting two or three gold coins into Anton's hand, the soft-hearted fellow pushed his way out into the rain.

"She won't want, gentlemen," the cigar merchant said proudly, "her home is here until she leaves Holland, but I'll take the money for her, all the same; it may comfort her some day. And now I'll leave you —and you won't stay late to-night, for I've got to tell her, you see,—and if you stay and she hears talking she'll ask perhaps if you know, and——" But Anton here came as near breaking down as his stolid nature would allow. The men moved off by twos and threes, everyone putting something into a large ash-tray which stood on the counter, and talking in low tones of Myrtle, who sat upstairs by her dead boy's little coffin, and whom Anton Secker had "got to tell."

It was easier than he thought, this terrible telling, simply because she did not believe it. That Rupert should be guilty of theft was to Myrtle impossible.

"That, at least, is false," she said proudly. Some things she might have heard, worse to hear, and thought them true, but this, at least, was not.

"Where is he?" she asked.

Anton looked at his wife, and together they murmured something about prison.

"Ah," said Myrtle, clasping her hands tightly, "that will vex him. Had he no one, I wonder, to prove his innocence. Is it too late now? perhaps I could prove it. What do they say he stole, and when? Perhaps,—but it is not likely," she added sadly, "he was with me at the time."

The two who sat by her side and wondered at the way she took their news, dare only say it was too late to do anything that night, but that she could see him in the morning.

She turned away from them, saying gently that she would like to be alone; so they left her.

Long she sat, half the night through, by the open window listening to the cool quiet rain, and once she held her face out to catch the gush of water, and wet her burning eyes which were not wet with tears.

What should she say to Rupert in the morning? She must forgive him now for letting his child die without his father's kiss—he could not help that. And she must try and comfort him for this temporary detention while the mystery—there must be a mystery—was cleared up. But though she tried to be gentle, and sorry for her husband, her heart was full of bitter thoughts about the beautiful Jewess who, perhaps, for aught she knew, might already have given him her sympathy in his trouble, and whom he had called his queen. Rupert did not need her—no one needed her now her boy was dead. She had but one wish, that she might die too—only then Rupert would marry Daria, and that she could not bear.

When she went downstairs in the morning, Dr. Isencraw was waiting for her. Poor Frau Secker had sent for him in her perplexity; it seemed his lot to be with Myrtle in all the trying events of her life.

His grave, pitying face filled Myrtle with a fear she had not hitherto felt. He had brought a cab with him, and they drove to the prison at once.

"You do not think Rupert will have any difficulty in proving his innocence?" Myrtle asked.

"I do not know," was the grave answer.

"But surely," she said, a new anxiety written in her eyes, "it is only in countries where there is no freedom that such things can be; I thought Holland was like England—where the innocent cannot be proved guilty."

"Yes, Holland is free," Isencraw answered, "but —God help you, madam!—we all have our temptations."

He took her hand, wrung it painfully, and turned his face to the window. It dawned upon Myrtle that he thought her husband might be guilty.

"Are the proofs——" she began timidly; but he stopped her at once.

"Do not speak more now. Your husband will talk to you; I only wished to prepare you for what might be a shock. There were at least proofs sufficient to justify a remand, and require a good defense. You must persuade him to retain a clever lawyer; his friends will provide funds."

They did not speak again until the cab stopped at the prison.

The wife was taken at once to her husband, and Isencraw waited for her.

"Myrtle?" Rupert said, in a wistful questioning tone, rising and holding out both hands to his wife. He wondered if she would turn from him now she knew he was a thief, but at sight of him she forgot where he was and why he was there, and remembered only now she had seen him last before their child died.

This gave an involuntary coldness to her manner; each, filled with different doubts, waited for the other to speak, and so this husband and wife met without any greeting kiss, and held each other's hands in silence.

Then Van Hals noted Myrtle's black dress, and said gently, as he placed her in a chair:

"Have you lost your boy, Myrtle?"

"Yes, he is dead," the mother said, with a stony calmness, "the heat killed him; the rain came too late."

"I little thought," Rupert murmured, with his head on his hand, "that I should live to say it is better a son of mine should die."

Then Myrtle roused herself; she remembered she had come to comfort her husband.

"Do not say that, Rupert; it is foolish. Your being here makes no real difference in you. No friend would let this mistake shake his friendship for a moment."

Something in his suddenly lifted face made Myrtle fancy he was surprised at what she said—possibly he thought she made light of his trouble.

"Of course, Rupert," she added, "I know it is hard for you. The very possibility that anyone, even an enemy, could make such a charge, vexes you, but——"

"Myrtle," her husband said, his eyes fastened on her face, "is it possible you believe me innocent?"

"My Rupert, did you think your wife could think you guilty?" She knelt by his side, and stroked his hands, his hair, his cheek, as if he had been a child in trouble.

"God bless you," he said, with a shaking voice. "God bless you, dear, and forgive me. I am guilty, Myrtle."

"Guilty? You do not mean—— Oh, Rupert, it is not true! Rupert, did you steal?"

She only whispered the last words, but Rupert heard them, and noted the almost imperceptible involuntary recoil which for a moment thrilled through her whole frame, although she still knelt by his feet. He could not answer her except by silence, and for some time Myrtle did not speak. Then he heard her say to herself, as if she had forgotten his presence:

"After all, the other was only for me to bear—this is disgrace."

What other sorrow she spoke of he did not know, but he caught at the last word.

"Yes, Myrtle, this is disgrace—and for you too, for you bear my name."

"It is better, oh, Rupert, it is better, as you said, that our boy should not live to know," and for the first time since the child's death his mother shed tears. Her tears relieved the mental tension of the past days, but she knew she must not stay long, and Rupert must be defended.

"Tell me," she asked, "all that you did. There must be some defense, some excuse."

"Excuse, yes; defense, no. I can even excuse

myself, Myrtle, now that I look back, as if it were some other man's life, for my mistakes began so long ago that it seems a lifetime. It was Leon's doing."

"Leon's doing!" and as she pronounced the name Rupert's wife shuddered.

"I was in debt to him. You know a little, but I dare not tell you the amount I had borrowed. I did not know it myself. I borrowed, imagining I could pay when my father died. And not imagining only, but being assured of my father's wealth by Leon himself. At my father's death I found out my mistake; instead of riches he left debts. These debts I paid—at a terrible cost; but like a fool, let my own debt run on."

"Oh, Rupert, why?"

Van Hals stopped, he knew why. Knew how he had been duped, perhaps half-unwillingly, by Leon's daughter, but he could not tell his wife, and a little constraint came into his manner, and Myrtle was sure, as though he had told her, that Daria's influence had guided him.

"I hardly know—because I was weak, I suppose. But one thing, Myrtle; bear in mind that I never dreamed the debt would be claimed without due warning; I thought it was a loan to help, not to ruin me! Now, listen; one day a paper was left at the studio claiming the debt in another man's name. I went to Leon—he would not see me; I appealed to the man, my creditor, to whom Leon had transferred my debt, and he gave me two days' grace. Oh, wife, before you judge, think! You know, for you have been sacrificed to it, what ambition was to me. I would rather die than fail, and to pay this meant ruin,

and utter failure. I say to pay this, but I am wrong; I could not pay it; I did not know where to borrow; the man could but have sold my studio and thrown us all out to starve, and I should have half the debt round my neck still!"

"Rupert, there was Harvey."

"I thought of Harvey. But I was too proud to ask your brother, Myrtle, and besides, when could I have paid him? But it is useless talking like this—the thing is done. The night I knew my fate I came home late. On our doorstep I kicked against a man. Do you remember the white dog that haunted the door, and would not leave it?"

"Krebs? Why, that was Jan Kranz's dog!" Myrtle cried.

"It was Jan Kranz who lay against my door. The dog was right, his master had been there."

"Oh, Rupert, what did you do?"

"When I opened the door and got a light, something sparkled. I traced it, felt the man's pockets—he was dead drunk. He had a pouch full of small diamonds."

"My husband, my poor husband!" said Myrtle, the tears raining down her white cheeks.

"Well, you know all now; I took them. The wise men say we are only virtuous until we meet with our special temptation; it may be true,—but however that may be, I took the diamonds. In the pouch with the others was one large stone, and I swear I did not know of its existence. For stealing that stone I am here."

"But, Rupert, I do not understand."

"I took the diamonds to Leon to sell; I told a lie,

as I needs must, about the way they came into my possession. As he turned them over and disparaged them, his face changed; I saw it change, but could not make out the reason. Then he showed me a big diamond, and offered to take it and give me a check for my debt. I was desperate and I accepted. From that moment I was in his power. He waited—for a few witnesses, I suppose—and had me arrested. I can say nothing; I am guilty."

Myrtle was silent, thinking.

"Rupert," she began, at length, "if you did not know of the large diamond, why not say you found the pouch in Jan's pocket; something might be explained."

"Poor child!" Rupert said, with a sad smile, unlike his old thoughtless self, "you would do much for your husband! Do you not see, Myrtle, that I am guilty all the same! I meant to take certain small diamonds, and with them I took a large one. There is only my bare word to prove I did it unwittingly. Would anyone believe me? And then there is Kranz. Do you know, Myrtle, I have a fancy that in all my worthless life, I shall care most to think I saved that poor drunken substitute of mine, when I might have betrayed him?"

"Yes, you are right, Rupert," his wife said sadly, and then the interview ended. Isencraw came to tell her she might not stay any longer. The two men shook hands a little coldly, for the doctor had doubted Van Hals' innocence from the first, and he saw by Myrtle's face that he had not been wrong.

She went up to her husband with a quietness which alarmed the doctor, knowing as he did that violent

grief has easy remedy, but that calm silence at a critical moment of trial indicates a fearful strain on future strength.

"Good-by, Rupert!" the poor wife said, and kissed him. "I will not fail you; I am your wife still. I think, perhaps, God will let me save you."

She spoke the words brokenly, and both men, looking at her face, read a purpose and a patience in it which awed them.

Van Hals could not bear to see her so white and still, and wrought to a strained unnatural calm which seemed to remove her to a distance from him, and he signed to Isencraw to lead her away.

She preserved the same quietness, and maintained the same control over herself, until Isencraw left her at Anton Secker's door.

"Get her to eat and sleep, if you can," he whispered to Frau Secker, as Myrtle passed on to her room without a word. "I must see her again to-morrow; if she keeps like this her brain will suffer."

Myrtle was enduring the hardest trial of her life. She was a woman who "needs must love the highest," and the highest to her had been Rupert van Hals. When he found her in her Devonshire home, his dreams of ambition, which could only attain dignity by work and self-sacrifice, were realities in her fond imagination. To be the chosen companion of a man with Rupert's aims and aspirations seemed to her a perfect life, and she was prepared for any self-denial for the husband she loved. Hers had been a slow and sad undeceiving. She could not shut her eyes to her husband's weakness, to his selfishness, his self-indulgence, his powerlessness to bear up against difficulty or

rise after defeat. She had seen him tire of his wife, and resent the necessity of working for his child; and within the last few weeks she had heard much of his love for another woman whom he would have married but for her creed. This last she was slow to believe until she herself had seen him with the Jewess, but after that she knew that his heart was not entirely hers.

She thought to have been proud of her husband, and she was ashamed.

Even if he had ceased to love her, he might have so acted that she could still have loved him; but the double life he had led troubled her—a nobler nature could not have stooped to it. She looked beyond this time of his weakness when he clung to her because he was in trouble, and saw that if prosperity came he would tire of her as he had tired of her before.

"I will save him," she exclaimed. "I know I shall save him, because I am his wife. But then I will go home."

CHAPTER XXX.

HUMAN nature, like the English language, is consistent chiefly in inconsistency.

The student of either, lulled for a moment into rash security and tempted to formulate a rule, will be confronted by such glaring exceptions as shall make him drop his pen in despair.

It was not wonderful that Dr. Isencraw, let him study Myrtle van Hals as he would, should be full of perplexity in his conclusions.

For if human nature in general is inconsistent, the

characteristic of the race is allowed to reach its climax in woman.

Myrtle's old love for her husband was wounded to death ; she had decided that she would not return to be the wife of a man who preferred another woman, but she would save him from disgrace before the world, and if this resolve led her to moral martyrdom it would be all the more welcome to her heart.

The simple straightforward plan which suggested itself was to appeal to Leon for mercy, but as she recognized the hopelessness of this, another way occurred to her which commended itself all the more because it would cost her so dear.

This was to plead with Daria to use her influence with the Jew. It was surer in its end, and more painful in its course, and Myrtle adopted it at once.

No one must know where she went, for though Rupert's infatuation was the talk of all his acquaintance, his wife could speak of it to none. So she waited until evening and then slipped out unseen, and took her way to the usurer's house in the Keizer's Gracht. She gave her name to the servant, and was admitted at once to a room where Leon's daughter sat alone.

Her studied attitude of careless indifference had its effect upon Rupert's wife, her beauty and her gorgeous surroundings explained some of the fascination she exercised over a man to whom luxury was almost a necessity.

The Spanish woman indicated by a slight bend of the head that she saw someone standing before her, but she did not speak, and Myrtle waited, gathering her strength for the appeal she must force herself to make.

"I come as a suppliant," she said. "But I cannot

stand." Her limbs were trembling, and as she seated herself, the room seemed dark for a moment.

"Who are you?" Leon's daughter asked indolently.

"I am the wife of Rupert van Hals, the sculptor."

The Jewess looked at her with a contemptuous glance.

"I remember your face now," she said. "Your husband has a model of you in his studio. But you are changed—or perhaps love idealized a little?"

The words were meant to wound, but if they succeeded Myrtle gave no sign.

"I was like it once," she said simply. "But we will not talk of that, the past is over; I want your help for the future."

"My help?" Daria repeated. Her tone was one of supercilious irony; it was as she thought—this woman was going to plead with her to leave her the possession of her husband's affection. The Jewess had anticipated this when she admitted her rival; she could not resist the added triumph such an interview would give her. She looked at the pale woman before her, beautiful to those who cared to see beauty even through a veil of grief, in a poor black dress, with thin hands locked together on her lap; and Daria's full lips curled with a smile of pride as she thought how Van Hals must contrast this cold, colorless English wife with herself, and who would gain by the contrast.

"I shall be happy to help anyone connected with Herr van Hals," Daria said, indolently watching her bullfinch, as he sat on her wrist and ate from her hand; "only since I have not the pleasure of his wife's acquaintance, I think he might have asked me himself. We are old friends."

The ill-concealed sneer in the words wounded Myrtle, and the look of pain on her face was visible to her enemy, as she forced herself to speak.

"He is in prison, madam."

Daria flung the bird from her hand, and started to her feet.

"In prison—in what prison?" she cried, her black eyes hiding such mingled anger and dread that Myrtle shrank from her gaze. "There has been some horrible mistake! In prison! who has dared?" She caught Rupert's wife by the wrist, "Speak, girl! he sent you,—he knew I would help him,—speak to me,—who accuses him?"

"Your father——"

"My father!" The Jewess fell back as if she had been struck; the utter hopelessness of her tone told Myrtle how inexorable Leon could be.

"Your father accuses him of taking a diamond,—he has had him arrested——"

"A diamond? It is false! He had it from England; he told me so himself."

"It did not come from England. Try and understand me—my husband has no friend in England who could send him diamonds. Your father knew it from the first, but he deceived him by buying the stone at half its value; then he accused him."

"But he, Rupert—your husband? what does he say?"

Her husband's shame dyed his wife's white cheeks crimson, as she said, with a piteous quiver on her mouth:

"He says he is guilty."

Daria knew it was true. Her father's manner when

he spoke to her about Van Hals had perplexed her at the time ; now it was explained. He had done what he threatened; he had saved his daughter from the fate he dreaded for her ; she had no longer any choice, Rupert was dead to her forever.

Her olive-tinted skin grew waxy-white, her dark eyes became dim, and Myrtle heard her murmur, "Cruel, cruel!" as she lay back in her chair.

Then Rupert's wife sprang from her seat, and knelt at Daria's feet.

"You care for him," she said ; "he is your friend, and you can save him. Your father will listen to your voice alone ; if you plead for him, he will not carry this through. Rupert is not condemned, there is time ; your father can refuse to prosecute at the trial. I know all, I have inquired ; he is safe, if you will plead for him."

"If I will plead for him? Why should I plead for him?" Daria said slowly, and with a curling lip.

"For his sake ; not for mine. I will go away. See what I promise, I who am his wife! I will leave Holland—will go back home. I am not strong ; I have lost my child, and when I leave my husband I shall not live long ; then when I am dead, you can be his wife—it is not long to wait, and it is the only way."

"Is this how English women love?" the Spanish Jewess said, with bitter scorn. "Would you save a man from disgrace at such a cost as this? If I loved this husband of yours and was his wife, I would kill him with my own hand before I would bid him love another. You do not know what you say, but you need make no promises, for I shall never claim them. If I save him, where will be my revenge?"

"Revenge?" Myrtle repeated the word vaguely. What Daria said was true, Myrtle hardly knew what the Jewess was saying, her own brain was full of one idea, to save her husband.

"Revenge!" the Jewess repeated, standing now, with Myrtle still at her feet. "Do not I owe you some vengeance for winning the love of the only man whom I could mold perfectly to my will? I bent my pride so that I had determined to marry him, I made my father consent to what was to him a degradation,—only for what? to learn that the man who wooed me was not free. Ah, you start—you do not know how long this has been going on; how long your husband has had no thought but for me. Before his child was born, before he went to Rome,—while you were alone at that bare desolate farm, his days were spent with me. I inspired his art, filled his imagination, and at last won his love. He is mine now, not yours—and I throw him aside. Go and tell him so! Tell him that Daria Leon scorns the man whom her father brands a thief; tell him her love was but a lure, and that she leaves him with the wife he disdained;—before he is out of prison she will marry another man!"

And laughing wildly, she swept past Myrtle as she knelt amazed, her rich dress brushing the clasped hands of the woman she had injured.

Her laugh died quickly, and she pressed her hand to her throat to keep back the choking sobs that almost mastered her, as she went to find her father.

When she threw open the door of his room with an imperious gesture, Leon knew that she had heard what had been done.

"Father, where is Rupert van Hals?" she cried in a ringing voice, as if the world might hear her.

"Why ask? you know he is in prison. You wondered at my story of the diamond, you saw its improbability; but that your love blinded you, you would have known—as I did—that your sculptor was a thief."

"No word of love to me again, father. Your Daria will not love him, nor any other man. Keep him in prison, hide him from my sight, and I will marry whom you please."

"Spoken like a Leon of Spain!" the Jew cried; "the mystic jewel works its spell. Shall it be the marquis, my Daria?"

His daughter turned away.

"Let it be whom you will. How long does the punishment last for theft?"

"For theft like this, years; at least I think so; much depends. There is no excuse, no palliation possible. Poor fool! He fell deeper than I had dared to hope, and there is no escape."

"But you must watch, father. After to-night never let me hear his name, but just this once I must speak to you. I tell you, father, I will not have it possible that he should return to his wife after a few months' imprisonment. I will never see him again; nor shall she. You have separated him from me, banish him from her! You have taken it upon you to ruin him for my sake, and I forgive you, father; some day,—not yet,—I may thank you; but if—if what you have done drives him back to his white-faced wife, his wife whom I hate—then I should curse you, father!"

"Child, child! be calm. You talk as if I had ruined him; *I* knew nothing of his theft. I accuse a thief, I do not make one. As truly as you stand there, Daria, doubting me in your heart—I stood amazed when he brought me the diamond."

"Bah!" the Spanish woman cried, "you cannot deceive your daughter. Who claimed his debt? Hellmann, as he said? No, no! you have not placed your spies everywhere to gain a power you are too merciful to use. You drove him mad with debt, and then—how, I know not—put the diamond in his path, when he was weak."

"Daria, I swear——"

"What matter how it was done?" his daughter interrupted coldly; "I doubt no more that he took the stone, than I do that but for my father he would not have touched it; or"—and she laughed bitterly—"than I doubt that but for my father's daughter he would be meekly happy with his English wife. Do you think I regret? I regret nothing. Only I have struck with a two-edged dagger, and, wounding her I hate, have scratched myself. What does that matter? my scratch will heal, or if not, I can hide it; but her wound is bleeding to death. And besides, these English women wear their hearts outside, for all the world to point at. She cannot hide her sorrow if she would."

Leon was silent. He dare not speak to Daria in this mood. Afterward, when she was quieter, he would justify himself, would explain how Van Hals took the diamonds from Kranz; but not now. Daria was shrewd enough to guess that Kranz might possibly be an agent of her father, and then there was no say-

ing where her love for Van Hals might lead her. When the sculptor was in prison, and Leon's beautiful daughter was married to a noble who would enable her to shine as queen in Paris society, then he would tell her how her father had schemed for her sake, and how his schemes were furthered beyond his hopes by the weakness of the man she had once loved.

Myrtle, left alone, knelt still as when Daria touched her, heart-sick and weary.

It had been hard to hear how long Rupert had cared for the Jewess, hard to humble herself for his sake, harder still to know that the pain she had endured had been in vain.

Caleb was right, she owned at last; all she could give—love and truth—were not enough for Rupert; he required luxury, and praise, and success. Success—and he had won only failure; he was in prison—her poor, weak husband, how would he endure the bitterness of it?

Wearily she rose to her feet, and something fell from the edge of her dress. It was a book. As it lay open on the floor Myrtle caught sight of delicate drawing that made her heart beat quickly. She stooped and picked up the volume. It contained short extracts from poets, Dante and Shakspere, and others of whom the Devonshire girl had never heard. Here were lines in a language she did not recognize, Spanish, she fancied; here were little French poems, here Italian verses, and all written in a woman's hand, and all exquisitely illustrated in Van Hals' most delicate style—the style which, carried out on vase and tazza, had won him some praise, before he knew Daria. It was perhaps the bitterest

drop in Myrtle's cup, this evidence of her husband's entire devotion to the Jewess. A man might not have dwelt upon it, a woman almost of necessity let her imagination picture the two bending over the pages together, the Jewess watching each turn of the artist's pencil as he traced those delicate, thoughtful, fanciful margins, around the verses she had chosen. For one passionate moment the wife bent her lips to the page—but no, the drawings were not for her. She laid the book on the table, and turned to come away. She found her way, how, she could not tell, out of the house, and into the fresh cool street. It was not quite dark, and yet through the trees that lined the roadway she could see here and there a star.

She walked home slowly, the tears dropping unheeded on her black dress.

"Oh, Rupert," she whispered, "it is indeed good-by."

She could not bear to dwell on all the discoveries which made the man she had believed in seem like a stranger to her; only one thing she clung to for comfort, that Rupert had refused to betray Kranz.

Presently she began to think of Kranz more calmly. She had seen a good deal of the poor diamond cutter, and knew his character well, both from her own observation and from Esther. The habit of drinking, acquired in the hot and trying climate of Java, had taken all the manhood out of him. He was pitiably weak, and was invariably influenced by the last person who spoke to him, not excepting his own feeble child. He was also contemptibly timid; Myrtle recalled how Esther had told her that some of his companions had proposed some easy theft from a deaf woman's unpro-

tected shop, and Jan had declined, not from principle, but from fear. Suddenly, like a flash of light, Myrtle became certain that Jan would not dare to steal the diamond. Daria's words about revenge had set her thinking, and on her way home she arrived so far at the truth as to conclude that Leon had placed the diamonds in Kranz's pocket as a lure to ruin Rupert. It was an improbable supposition, but it seemed rational to Myrtle, and she determined to take Esther into her confidence, and to sound Kranz on the subject.

Frau Secker met her at the door, uneasy at her absence. She looked in her niece's face, but something she read there stopped her questions. She only took Myrtle's cold hands, and said, gently patting them with her old caressing gesture:

"I did not think you would have left the child while he lay dead, Myrtle."

"The child is in heaven, and his father is in prison; who needs me most?" the desolate mother asked, and Frau Secker said no more.

Dr. Isencraw came forward too, his face full of respectful concern. He had arranged that the boy's funeral should take place next morning, and all day he had been wondering how best to help Myrtle, who after the trial, if her husband was sentenced to any lengthened imprisonment, would be alone in a strange land.

He decided that the time had come to write to Harvey, and with a full heart, but in somewhat pedantic English, he had summoned her brother to Myrtle's side. The stilted phrases, the elaborate courtesy, the foreign construction of the sentences,

might have brought a smile to the face of anyone who watched the little Dutch doctor as he sat alone and wrote; and yet the round spectacles were often dimmed, and the carefully written sheets were many times torn up with a brief sharp Dutch exclamation, chiefly directed against a man for whom neither the writer nor the receiver of the letter had much pity.

"Have you written to madame, your mother?" Isencraw ventured to ask.

"My mother? Ah, no."

"It is so sad to write of death," the doctor went on, knowing full well that to Myrtle death was the lesser sorrow, "and I knew you were tired and needed rest, so I ventured to write to your brother to-day."

Myrtle looked at him keenly; she knew all about that letter, and the news it carried to Red Hill Farm.

"Thank you, my friend," she said quietly.

"I thought," Dr. Isencraw added, emboldened by her acquiescence, "that if, as we know is possible, your husband has to remain in confinement for any length of time, your brother would take you home."

"My husband will not stay in prison, doctor; I feel sure that he will be free, by God's mercy; but it is good to send for Harvey, because even if—even when Rupert is free, I shall go home all the same."

And by this Isencraw knew that Rupert's wife had heard of Daria Leon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IT was Saturday morning, and Myrtle van Hals was on her way to see Kranz and Esther. She had buried her dead out of her sight, as men do in time of supreme danger, when there is no time for grief, but only for action.

Walking along quiet streets, for she had much to think over before she ventured to speak to Kranz—Myrtle felt a hand on her arm, and turning saw Esther herself by her side.

"I am troubled about Jan," the Jewess said abruptly.

"About Jan?" Myrtle asked the question eagerly, and with an excitement of manner which Esther noted.

"Do you know anything about Jan?" the girl whispered, looking hastily round. They were passing the English church, and Myrtle drew her companion up the narrow flagged way that led to the primitive little building.

"We shall be quiet here," she said, choosing a projecting stone where they could sit, "and can talk undisturbed. Tell me about Jan."

Esther sat silent for a few minutes, stroking Myrtle's hand, which she held in hers, and—so Myrtle thought—striving for calmness. Presently, with a sort of repressed sob in her voice, she said:

"Jan is out of work now."

"Out of work?"

"Yes, he was tempted to drink with some of his old companions, and he got half wild and was not at the

factory for two days, and at last when he went they told him he need come no more."

"Esther, surely he has had warnings? He knew he must go if he drank again."

"No," Esther said, dropping her voice to a whisper, "and it's that that troubles me. He trusted to Leon; he seems to have fancied Leon would always see that he was taken back; and when the manager turned him off, he laughed in his face and went straight to Leon's house; but he would not see him, and sent word he could interfere no more."

It was evident that, needing Kranz no longer, the money-lender had cast him off, as a useless and perhaps hampering appendage.

"How was it Leon interfered before?" Myrtle asked.

"I don't know. Jan seems to have expected great things from him. All the time Rachel was ill, he sat by her side, and told her how rich he would be soon, and how he would take her away to a sunny land where she would get strong and well. The child often asked questions as to who would give him the money, and then he used to look round to see if I was near, and if he thought I took no heed, he said it was Leon the Jew, Leon the diamond prince, and all kinds of fantastic names."

"I wonder what he meant," Myrtle said, pondering.

"Even to me he said that he would have it in his power to do Leon a great service, and one for which he would pay well. If I did not speak, he went on; once he said that yellow diamonds brought luck, and that men sold their souls for gems; but if I questioned him he seemed nervous and timid and would not speak again."

"How does he take his dismissal? Poor Esther—all the work falls on you now!"

"I do not care; I do not care! I would die for my sister's child or for Jan. But I am afraid of Jan! When he came from Leon's house he was like a madman; he would have been dangerous only he was so weak. He cursed Leon; he said he was the devil and had bought his soul, and now he would not pay; and at night he frightened me, for he sat up holding his two thin hands in the air, and catching at something he fancied dropped from his fingers, and counting, counting over and over again. Little Rachel woke and cried out, and asked what he had found, and he whispered all across the room in the dark—such a horrible, hoarse whisper, 'Bort, child, only bort—but they shine for all that; don't tell Esther.'"

"What is bort?"

"It is the name they have for small stones, that can only be used for dust. Oh, I am afraid," the poor girl cried, bursting into tears, "that he has stolen some diamonds from the works."

"Listen, dear," Myrtle said, "and try and help me to think. I believe Jan has stolen diamonds; but I believe someone stronger than he is more guilty. Tell me, Esther, do you think your brother dare run a great risk?"

"I am sure he dare not; but he has often said there is little risk in taking bort. And oh, it was through me he got the place of diamond cutter; if I put him into temptation, surely I am guilty?"

"What should you say if I told you that with those small diamonds which he fancies he holds still, was an almost priceless gem belonging to his master,

Leon? a gem for stealing which my husband is in prison now?"

Esther was dumb with surprise; she had not heard of Van Hals' imprisonment.

Then Myrtle told her all the story; she kept back no detail, trusting her faithful heart implicitly, and knowing that only by sifting the truth unflinchingly could she hope to succeed in discovering a weak point in the usurer's armor.

Jan had muttered, half-asleep and half-drunk, many broken sentences, which the two women repeated again and again, lest any word of meaning should have escaped them. He had fancied himself on a boat more than once, and had cried out that he was falling into the water, and Esther found that expressions to which she had attached no importance were all parts of one unbroken chain.

Myrtle's idea that Leon had planned the stealing of the diamonds by Kranz, in order that Rupert might meet the temptation which should vanquish and ruin him, was too wild for probability.

"If he had been the devil Jan takes him for," Esther said, with practical sense, "he could not have known your man would pass by where Jan lay drunk."

"Then where is the mystery? We both know how timid Jan is. To take a gem so guarded as this one must have been and imagine that he could sell it without discovery, would show a reckless daring impossible to your brother. Could he have stolen the dust, and have found the large diamond mixed with it?"

"Impossible. You do not know the precautions taken when they have a valuable stone at the mills.

The lower workmen never even see such stones. I can think of nothing—you must ask Jan himself."

"Ask Jan?"

"Yes, Jan is taking care of Rachel; go and talk to him; he lets slip strange words now and then, and you may find what you seek, but I doubt it. As well fight against fate as against Leon."

"Esther," Myrtle cried, laying her hand on the Jewess' shoulder, "once when I was young and proud, and thought myself strong, I said fate could have no power over us except what we ourselves gave it. And even now I try to keep my old faith. Leon could touch neither Rupert nor Jan if they had been strong. There is no fate here, Esther."

The two women parted, and Myrtle passed unmolested through the Jews' quarter; she was known to most now as the friend of Kranz's Esther.

Presently she came in sight of the cellar Jan called his home.

Rachel sat in the sun, just outside her father's door, propped up with a piece of sacking, and trying to tie a row of beads round the neck of patient Krebs, who edged himself nearer and nearer, his anxious dog's eyes fixed on the child, as each failure drew a weak sigh from her little breast.

Kranz lay on the ground behind Rachel's chair; he was half asleep, but one hand was twisted into a bit of the child's frock, so that she could not move away without his feeling her.

Myrtle stooped and tied the beads round Krebs, who wagged his tail because Rachel was pleased; and then she opened a little basket and showed the child some fruit.

"I will carry you inside, dear, because I want to talk to father." And she lifted the chair with the feeble little Jewess in it. Kranz raised his head and muttered.

"Kranz," Myrtle said, touching him, "help me with Rachel; I have some fruit for her."

Jan helped her, and set the child's chair by the window; then dragged a broken stool forward for Myrtle and sat on the window ledge himself. His feet did not feel firm enough to trust himself standing.

"The little one has been ill, I can see," Myrtle began gently; the way to Jan's better nature lay through his child, she knew. "She is weak, and thinner than she was, but you might have lost her, Kranz; I have lost my boy."

As Myrtle spoke it seemed to her as if she was speaking of a child who had died years ago.

"Ay, Esther told me," Jan said slowly, but with a remnant of that power of rousing himself to the troubles of others which was a relic of what he called his "good days." The man was better educated than his present position indicated, and had somewhere in the past developed a conscience and a sense of right and wrong, which, when not dulled by drink, had a knack of troubling him.

"The strong are often taken," he went on, feeling he ought to say something, "and little weak things like her live on," and he laid his drink-shaken hand on Rachel's head, and cried feebly—tears were quick to come to Jan's eyes now. "But I am going to take her away from here."

"That is a good thing," Myrtle said, humoring him, "a change of air would strengthen her—she

wants sun and warmth. Have you got work elsewhere?"

The drunkard stumbled across to where Myrtle sat, and then sank down on the floor at her feet.

"You'll not tell Esther," he began; "she cannot understand, but I shall be a rich man soon."

"A rich man?" Myrtle steadied her voice by a supreme effort, lest he should guess how she noted each word he spoke.

"Yes, rich! Old Jan Kranz the drunkard,—men call me that, you know, but it is not true,—old Kranz, turned off work, poisoned long ago, I forget how now—it's long ago—sick and ill—I have been ill—but it is not drink that does it; he, this poor fellow I talk of, will be rich!"

Rupert's wife forced herself to listen to his rambling talk.

"You will be rich?" she said distinctly, for his mind seemed to wander away from his subject, "and then you will take Rachel away, far from this poor cellar, to where she will grow strong and well and happy, and have rosy cheeks like other children. You will do all this, Kranz—how?"

She talked until a light of intelligence came back to his face.

"How?" he asked, a little wildly. "How can I be rich? Poor Jan Kranz? I know—Esther does not know—only I; and I will tell you. You know Leon's yellow diamond?"

With wildly beating heart, but quiet voice, Myrtle said, "I know."

"He must have it, Leon must have the diamond. He has promised a reward,—no, I dare not tell you

how much, a grand reward,—and some day I shall take the stone, big and yellow—he showed me how to make no mistake—he gave me a glass, look!" and he took from his pocket a magnifying glass of peculiar construction, and laid it on Myrtle's knee.

Years afterward she remembered the icy cold that struck her while she let that glass lie on her dress untouched. If she had stretched a finger for it, Jan's suspicions, always ready to awake, would have been roused, and he would have told her no more; but the restraint she put on herself chilled her, like the grasp of a steel hand.

"I had the stone once, it is a lucky stone! I am sure I had it—but I forget again—there was a lottery—I had the stone, had it safe, safe with the others, one for him and many for me—that was fair?"

"Yes," Myrtle said.

Jan leaned his head back against the wall and closed his eyes; she drew a fold of her dress over the magnifying glass; perhaps he would forget it. Then she waited. The child ate her fruit with low laughter, the laughter of a half-animal being; Rachel was little wiser than the white dog at her feet. Krebs slept. Presently, quite suddenly, Jan looked up.

"I lost it!" he cried; "it was stolen, stolen out of my pouch, this leather pouch, see!"

He pulled from under the straw of his bed a black and rubbed pouch, held it up and tossed it to Rachel, who caught it with a little guttural cry. The hot blood rushed to Myrtle's face as she saw the pouch her husband had taken, but she neither moved nor spoke.

"But it makes no difference; I shall find it; no

one knows it but me, Leon only showed me. I shall take it to Leon, and he will pay me—as he promised—and I shall be rich! He paid me before, something, I can't remember what—not enough. But now I shall be rich—when I take him the stone."

Eagerly Rupert's wife leaned forward, a sudden inspiration filled her with resolution.

"Leon has the stone now!" she cried, in a clear, strong voice.

A dull, threatening look, as of a wild creature at bay, came into Jan's face; before he could speak, Myrtle went on:

"Leon has deceived you! He will not pay you, because he needs you no longer. The yellow diamond is in Leon's hands."

"Who says it?" Kranz ground the words between his set teeth.

"I say it. I know a man who saw Leon with the diamond; a man who took Leon the diamond; a man who was paid for the diamond! Think," Myrtle said, looking in the drunkard's face, "think! would Leon refuse you his protection if he needed you? Has he not before this prevailed on your employers to take you back when they threatened to turn you away? Why does he not do it now? Has his power gone? Or is it that he needs you no longer?"

"Curse him," the wretched man moaned, "curse him! he has betrayed me. Jew for Jew, he said; Jew with Jew against the Christian. He has made it Jew against Jew, and he shall learn that is the bitterest foe of all."

The man rose to his feet and stood a moment erect, strong, transformed by the might of his revenge.

"Paid him?" he questioned, sinking down again; "paid another for my work? Where is that other man? Tell me, and I will go to him, and will show him I have first right. I stole the diamond; Leon told me where it was—showed me the case—urged me to take it—promised me the reward—aye, and when I was afraid, bade me drink to gain courage!"

"Are you sure?" Myrtle asked. "Will you revenge yourself on your false master, and let the world know?"

She had gone too far; a cunning gleam crossed Jan's dim eyes: she wanted him to tell about Leon, so he would not do it. "I am sure—but that is my business. Do you want me put in prison? Do you see that if I speak of him I betray myself? What I did he taught me, but who will believe that? Ask people who is most like a thief, the rich money-lender or the poor diamond cutter, and what will they say?"

Myrtle saw her error and sat silent. Jan lay back half exhausted, and the child turned and twisted the leather pouch in her feeble fingers. Rupert's wife watched her wearily, then looking at Kranz she saw that he was sinking into a sort of stupor from which he must be aroused before it was too late. She shook his arm and Jan started, abject terror on his white face.

The hunted look, the furtive glance around, prompted Myrtle to work on his fears.

"Jan," she said firmly, "have you thought of that man I told you of? He is the man who took the diamond to Leon. Do you know you are in danger from him?"

"Danger? What danger?" Kranz whispered, with a shudder.

"He may denounce you. I do not say he will," Rupert's wife added softly, as if to herself, proud that here at least her husband had shown himself noble, "but he may."

"What can he say?" the whisper came again, full of fear, but obviously only fear of a vague danger; the Jew did not follow Myrtle's thought.

"What can he say? Think. If he took the diamond to Leon, where did he get it? What you lost, he found. He is in prison now; Leon sent him to prison for stealing the yellow stone, which you stole first. When the time for his defense comes, what shall you say, if he tells how he found you sleeping, with the diamond in your pouch!"

Kranz flung up his hands wildly, and struck his head; the blow seemed to kindle a blind anger in his whirling brain.

"If he said that, I would speak too; I would tell who is the guiltiest of us three; I would show Leon is a thief too! If I put a boy through a window to undo the house-door for me, who is punished most, the child or I? If I teach Rachel there to snatch a handkerchief from a stranger's pocket in the crowd, does the child go to prison, or the father who lives by her gain? The devil does not rule the world yet; I will speak out; I will shame Leon."

"And I will help you, Kranz," Myrtle said impulsively; "do you not see you will save yourself so? If you accuse Leon you stop his mouth; he cannot prosecute for what he prompted himself. You are guilty, and my friend of whom I speak is guilty,"—Myrtle did not dare to name her husband for fear Jan's old enmity might oppose her efforts,—"but Leon

is guiltier than all; challenge him and he must be silent."

"I dare not," Kranz muttered feebly, much to Myrtle's dismay, his mood changing; "he is Leon, after all; no man can stand against him; if that man you tell of accuses me I will deny all, and Leon will bear me out. But who can denounce me?" he added, with a cunning look; "you say yourself that other thief will not."

While Myrtle hoped she kept calm; now that the help she counted on seemed slipping from her grasp, a passionate instinct of self-defense seized her, or rather that craving to protect her own which in women and in mother-animals turns weakness into strength. She rose to her feet like an avenging goddess.

"I will denounce you!" she said slowly. with set lips; "I know more than you think, and I will accuse you, Jan Kranz, of taking from the diamond works one priceless gem for Leon the money-lender at his command and direction, and—how many smaller diamonds for yourself, prompted by the tempter who leads men astray?"

Jan trembled at her feet. Tall, with white, stern face, and resolute eyes fixed on his own, she seemed the angel of retribution.

"It is false," he stammered.

"It is true!" she cried, with an exultant ring in her clear tones. "See, your child accuses you!"

She pointed with straight, unwavering finger directly at the child. Rachel had turned the leather pouch inside out, and her little nails had picked at every corner, and now, hidden all these days in the fold of one of the pockets, lay disclosed a diamond. Kranz

knew what it was in a moment, and reached forward to get it, but Myrtle was quicker than he.

She took the stone and the pouch from Rachel's impassive hand.

"Will you deny the theft, Jan," she asked mercilessly, "when I can show this pouch, so easily sworn to by those who have seen you use it for years; this little stone, small, but large enough to condemn you, since it will confirm the truth of my story that others lay where it was found? You think no one knows of your theft; but Leon knows, and holds back those smaller stones that he may have power over you when the time comes to use it."

The wretched man rolled over on his face and bit at the straw of his bed in his despair.

"Lost, lost!" he cried. "It is true, Leon knows. Leon will ruin me: I shall be sent to prison! Oh, God, my little child!"

Myrtle followed his thoughts; he knew Rachel would not live until he was free; he crept to her side, and laid his worn, haggard face against hers, and she, poor little thing, mercifully shut out from comprehending her father's misery, patted his cheeks with her yellow, transparent hand, and loved him.

To Rachel and to Krebs, Jan Kranz was a man still, and not a wreck.

Myrtle's heart ached to see the two, the father and child, of whom it was hard to say which was the weaker.

"Jan," she said gently, "will you try and listen to me? You see that both Leon and that other man I told you of, can accuse you, if they will. If they accuse you, you are lost unless you tell how

Leon incited you to crime. Be a man and do this now. Look at me, Jan, and listen, and try to understand. If you will sign a paper telling all Leon said to you, and let me use it to save my friend,—it will save you too, remember,—then I promise, Jan, that I will take you and Rachel home to England with me. I will find you work; I have a brother who will never fail me, and Rachel will perhaps be strong there. There are flowers, Rachel," she said, her eyes full of tears, for her strength was leaving her fast, and it seemed as if her dead boy pleaded with her for this which would save his father.

Rachel clapped her wasted hands feebly; Jan looked bewildered from her to Myrtle. "Will you promise?" he asked; "will you keep your promise?"

"Jan," Rupert's wife said very slowly, "I had a child too, and it is in heaven, do you think I dare break my word to your child?"

So the agreement was made, and Myrtle left. When Esther came back, an hour later, she found Jan asleep with Rachel in his arms, and Krebs watching.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MYRTLE went at once to Isencraw's house. Her journey brought back all the sorrows of the night when she had last sought him, but this time she drove quickly through the streets, knowing that time and strength were of more value now than money.

She told her story, and he listened carefully, thinking, somewhat bitterly, in his friendly, faithful heart,

what treasures of love were being wasted on Van Hals, while he must content himself with the knowledge that in all difficulty Myrtle turned instinctively to him. He was not over-sanguine as to the success of Myrtle's plan, being disposed to agree with Kranz, that Leon was a man sure to have infinite resources in the background, and very unlikely to yield at the first blow. Still as there was nothing else to be done, it behooved him, as Myrtle's adviser, to see that every detail was carried out with due precaution.

The doctor insisted that Kranz should be in sure keeping, and proposed to go at once and bring him to his own house. If he was allowed to indulge in one of his drinking fits, all hold over him might be lost; and then again Leon might easily regain power over so weak a tool.

Having decided on this, Isencraw called Daatje and gave Myrtle to her care, ordering wine and food with a lavishness and inattention to fasting which called forth a remonstrance from the faithful servant whose economy and Catholicism were alike outraged, and who was apt to think herself much better than her neighbors because she lived in a country where there were three fast days in a week. However, Daatje owned the common weakness of being better than her creed, and was soon caring for Myrtle with motherly tenderness, lamenting over the thinness of her once rounded arms, and reminding her with innocent awkwardness of the day when "the handsome gentleman" brought her all wet and white to have her shoulder set by "the doctor."

"I used to fancy," Daatje went on, "that surely the doctor would take to the pretty lady he thought

so much of, but it was not to be; and perhaps it is all the better, for I could never have stood a wife, not even one like madam—knitting his socks English fashion, and wanting bacon cooked on Good Friday."

When Myrtle had been induced to eat a little, and forced to drink some warm spiced wine, she lay on the doctor's little stiff sofa, and listened to Daatje's rambling talk until weakness and weariness laid calming hands on the tempest of thoughts that swept through her brain, and she slept.

When she awoke it was evening. Daatje was still in the room, but Isencraw was standing by the side of the couch, and Esther came and took her hand.

The doctor explained that he had found Kranz apparently on the verge of an attack of delirium tremens, but, to his surprise, frightened and not oblivious of his pledge to Myrtle. Still, although Jan was quiet at present, his fits of fear, and anxious looking into corners, indicated that it would be wise to have his statement in writing, and therefore Isencraw had brought a lawyer whom he knew well, and who would put the document in the best form attainable under the circumstances.

Isencraw had sent Rachel under Esther's care to the home of a woman on whom he could rely, and who would keep the child until Myrtle took her to England; and then Esther had, by his direction, come here to witness Jan's statement.

The lawyer brought Kranz in, and the poor diamond cutter, thoroughly awed and somewhat bewildered, gave his testimony in a state of abject tearfulness, but clearly enough and with obvious truth.

It was arranged that Kranz should remain under

Isencraw's roof, the only plan that provided against the double danger of his falling in with his drinking companions, or being influenced by Leon. Myrtle would, of course, return at once to the Secker's house, Esther going back at present to her old room, lest any of the money-lender's spies should take word to him that the Kranz family had fled.

But Rupert's wife did not intend to leave much time for the Jew to make any discovery which might put him on his guard, for on the next day, Sunday, she would present herself at his house, with a copy of Jan's statement, of which the original would be in the lawyer's hands.

"Madam," said the young lawyer prudently, "have you thought what you will do if you are refused admission?"

"I am afraid I must not give my name—Leon will not see a Van Hals. If I am denied entrance I must force my way in."

"That is impossible. Remember that Leon is perpetually at war with mankind; every tenth man in the city has a grievance against him, and he takes his precautions accordingly; no one sees Leon whom Leon does not wish to see. Whom the usurer would ruin, to him he denies himself!"

"I have a paper from the chief rabbi," Esther said timidly; "he gave it me this morning in case Rachel should be worse and require prompt help. It will admit you to Herr Leon's presence, and on the first day of the week he will be unsuspicious—it is his charitable day."

"Is the money-lender charitable?" asked the lawyer comtemptuously.

"He gives a tithe of certain moneys in charity to my own knowledge," answered the doctor. "Does that surprise you? Have you never remarked that religiously scrupulous persons are often reckless of the law of humanity? The human mind is liable to be blinded by constant gazing at its own dazzling virtue."

Myrtle did not like the idea of gaining admission to Leon under false colors, but she had a reason of her own for believing her friend's warnings; after her interview with Daria, the Jew would certainly be on his guard.

Next morning found her at Leon's business door. There were few other claimants for the rich man's favor, and of those most had come, as Esther said, because it was his charitable day.

She was asked her errand, and on showing the paper from the chief rabbi, was told to sit down and wait.

She waited, perhaps an hour, and then a clerk summoned her to Leon's presence.

For a moment, entering the dark room from the brightly lighted vestibule, she could distinguish nothing. Presently she saw that the Jew sat with his back to her, and had the rabbi's note open before him.

"Esther Verminden," he read; for Esther was referred to in her own name, so her connection with Kranz was wholly unknown to Leon.

"You are no Jewess?" he asked sharply, turning round and fronting Myrtle.

"No, I am English."

"Is this your name?"

"No."

"Then why come to me under false pretenses? The chief rabbi can hardly know. Do you come for charity."

"I came thus, because you would have refused to see me any other way. And I come for justice, not charity?"

"Your name?" Leon asked suspiciously. He had spoken to her in English, after the first question, and the use of this language had unconsciously suggested to his brain, filled just then with thought of his enemy, Van Hals' English wife.

"My name is Myrtle van Hals. My husband is now in prison, on your accusation, waiting his trial for theft."

Her boldness surprised Leon, but his plans were too cautiously laid for him to be in the least alarmed.

"And you want justice for him?" the Jew asked, with that lifting of his upper lip which showed his teeth, like the snarl of an animal. "That request is easily granted; for that end he is in prison."

"Pardon me," Myrtle said, coming a step nearer; "it is not just to punish one when others are equally guilty. I demand that my husband's accomplices shall be accused."

Leon half laughed. What had this English woman got into her silly brain; did she suppose that he was afraid to accuse Kranz?

"So!" he said, with a horrible leer in his sinister eyes, "the little wife has seen her husband in prison, and he tells her how and where he found the diamond. She knows now that a drunken Jew was her husband's useful tool, and she wants him dragged into the indictment. Well, it is human nature; if I am dying of

the plague, it comforts me to hear my neighbor cannot escape! But I should not have suspected the feeling in the breast of so gentle a lady!"

"You have still omitted one name from your list, and that the guiltiest," Rupert's wife said, with flashing eyes; "when a plot is discovered, do you punish the ringleaders or the subordinates? Rupert van Hals is guilty, and Jan Kranz is guilty, but guiltiest of all is Herr Leon, who planned the crime."

Leon's face darkened; was this a happy guess, or did the woman know?

"You might well call Kranz a tool," Myrtle continued, never taking her eyes from his face, "the word suggests itself to the man who formed and used him as a tool. Who taught Kranz how to distinguish the yellow stone he was to steal for his master? Who gave him a magnifying glass that there might be no mistake? Who showed him where the diamond was kept, and, knowing his cowardice, bade him turn to drink for courage?"

The details, obviously learned from Kranz alone, convinced Leon that the woman before him knew his connection with the robbery.

"Has the fool dared?" he cried, surprised out of his habitual caution.

"The fool has dared," Myrtle answered fearlessly. For the time she was not the sorrowful wife of Rupert van Hals, but the daughter of bold John Prosser, strong in spirit as when she trod the Devon moors.

Leon bit his lip; he knew he had betrayed himself.

"I am always ready to help beauty in distress," he said, changing his tone; "what is it you ask?"

"Simply that you will decline to prosecute when

my husband is brought to trial. If you are silent, he will be free. The poor weak tool—yours, not his—will escape too; and you will be no loser, for you have the diamond for which you schemed."

The Jew looked at her with involuntary admiration. Had she no fear?

"And if I refuse?" he said.

"Then I take my chance! The lawyer who defends my husband will tell the fact. Everyone will know of the debt contracted by cunning urging on your part, and then suddenly and irregularly claimed. People shall hear how Herr van Hals, maddened by fear of the ruin he saw hanging over him, yielded to the temptation which fell in his way, and stole the diamonds found upon Kranz."

"Well?"

"Then Kranz will swear that it was at his patron's instigation he took the priceless gem, and that but for that patron he would not have pilfered the smaller stones, which you kept, presumably as giving you a hold on your victim."

"So Kranz is to be your witness, is he? A trustworthy one indeed! And suppose on the day of trial I am in court and happen to look at your champion? Do you think he will dare utter one word with my eye upon him?"

"I do not know, but we have his statement taken from his lips in writing—he will confirm that. Will you see it?"

Leon took the paper she held toward him and read it. His yellow cheek grew livid with rage, but he did not speak. Then he lighted a taper and burned the paper to ashes.

Suddenly he looked at Myrtle; she stood as she had stood all the time, silently watching.

"Of course that is only a copy?" Leon asked.

"Yes."

"You are no ordinary woman, Madame van Hals; your sex is not generally silent in the hour of triumph. I tested you when I burned the paper; I thought you could not have resisted telling me that you supposed I was foolish enough to imagine I was burning your proof. You deserve to succeed."

Any commendation or flattery contained in his words was negatived by the bitter hatred underlying them, and which was apparent in every inflection of the speaker's voice.

"I shall succeed," Myrtle said quietly. "You have been my husband's enemy almost from the first. Lawyers talk of conspiracy and malice—I do not understand all this; but I will ask your daughter if Herr van Hals was not lured into debt by false representations. She may be cruel like her father, but unlike her father, I do not think she will stoop to a lie."

Leon winced. He too had thought of Daria; at any moment she might turn against him; and he could not meet her scorn. The case was strong against him. He would probably have to yield, and might as well yield gracefully. But he must fight a little longer.

"It has doubtless not escaped so astute a lady as yourself," he said, after a silence, "that there is no proof beyond the prisoner's statement that the diamond was found on Kranz. This link in the chain may snap."

"There is this proof, that I hold a leather pouch belonging to Kranz, in which both he and my husband say the diamonds were placed; and all this time, hidden in the lining of it, a small diamond has resisted discovery, until Jan's own child found it—a confirmation at least of our story."

"You do not then consider your case unassailable?"

"Our case is on a par with your reputation," said Rupert's wife, and Leon wondered that such a woman could so answer him. "No weaker and no stronger. If you have no honor to lose, we threaten you in vain. We can show you no baser than the world knows. But if your reputation is like this house where you live, fair on the outside with marble and carved wood, and holding, unknown and unseen, this dark den where you grind the faces of the poor—then our case is strong, for you will shrink from letting men see the heart recesses of the man they have admired."

"You have spoken," the money-lender said, his eyes fixed with a strange expression on the slight figure of Rupert's wife. "It shall be as you say. I will stretch out no hand, and speak no word against this husband for whom you plead. But, one word of warning. When the despised Jews were a strong and fierce nation, the jealous God who ruled them had two ways of dealing with His people. Sometimes He thwarted them, and then they lived to bless Him; and sometimes He granted their prayer, and sent leanness into their soul. You will live to curse the day when I took my lash from your husband's back."

Leon's menacing black eyes, his bony uplifted arm, and the solemn prophetic tone of his last words, made Myrtle shudder.

She shrank back a pace or two, and took hold of a chair for support.

The Jew laughed.

"You tremble!" he cried. "Perhaps you have shown me a surer revenge than I had planned! Perhaps she was right, who urged vengeance on the wife; but right or wrong, she has it now. Do you know that your husband worshiped my daughter's very footfall? that all Amsterdam has talked of his admiration for the Jew's daughter? And it is the wife he neglected, and whose fetters galled him until he was almost breaking them, who comes to plead for his liberty! He shall have it. I will let him alone. But will he go back to you, brave and true though you may be, or will he follow as he followed before, until you learn too late that you have saved him only to give him to your rival? Time will show."

The cruel speech wounded her to whom all the Jew could tell was known too well, but it re-kindled the dying spirit in her heart.

"Time is God's," John Prosser's daughter said, going back to the old faith of her simple English home. "Only to-day is ours. He can turn my husband's heart as He will."

She walked to the door as she spoke, and Leon followed her.

"You owe me some thanks," he said, with a bow, half-cringing, half-contemptuous. "Will you forgive me and give me your hand?"

Leon would have been strangely glad if this brave Englishwoman would have thought well of him.

She shook her head sadly, and tried to pass him.

"I thought your religion taught you to forgive," said the Jew, with a sneer.

"Our own injuries, yes," Myrtle answered, her dark eyes on his. "But if I were to forgive you—who welcomed him to your house, and under plea of friendship beguiled him, who stabbed him while he raised the cup of your hospitality to his lips—if such forgiveness were possible, even a coward like you would have the right to scorn me."

The Jew quailed before the transfigured woman, but showed little outward emotion.

"It is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, after all," he said bitterly. "The Jew triumphs, as of old."

Then he closed the door behind his strange visitor, and turned back into his own room. He opened the case of yellow diamonds, and sat long contemplating them. It was mortifying to be compelled to yield to a woman's reasons, but even if he denied all she threatened to reveal, enough would cling to him to make men suspicious and spoil other and greater schemes he had in hand. No, he must let Van Hals go, and forego his revenge; and after all he had the talismanic stone, and Daria must be happy.

"When she is married," he muttered to himself, "this moon-struck sculptor will be her husband's affair."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DR. ISENCRAW'S letter was brought to Harvey Prosser as he stood working with his men in the hay-field at Red Hill Farm. Two years had changed Harvey Prosser from a bright-faced, laughing boy into a man, serious and silent.

He knew that Isencraw's letter portended trouble, and he must be alone when he read of his sister's sorrow.

He followed the path until he came to a hollow of Red Hill, and there, throwing himself down in the long, cool shadow cast by a shoulder of the moor, he opened the letter.

It was slow reading for the Devonshire farmer; the small, neat, cramped writing, the unfamiliar turns of expression, the long sentences with their curiously placed verbs, perplexed Harvey. Still, he could understand that Myrtle's child was dead; that Rupert was in prison; Isencraw feared he was guilty——

"I *know* he is guilty," muttered the Devon boy, with clenched teeth.

If, as was possible, he was condemned to long imprisonment, Isencraw knew that Harvey would take his sister home. It had come at last.

In certain self-centered natures, the family ideal is very strong; it is a pleasant form of self-worship to put a father or sister on a pedestal, and to contemplate in them one's own glorified image.

Harvey rejoiced that Myrtle would be a Prosser and his own again.

As to her husband, it only seemed to her brother

that she had found out what he knew all along, that Van Hals was a base coward. The poor, selfish, loving boy did not know all that this "finding out," had meant to Rupert's wife.

There was no train that night, but early next morning Harvey Prosser was on his way to Amsterdam for the second time.

He had telegraphed to Isencraw, and the doctor met him at the well-remembered railway station.

Isencraw greeted him warmly, but looked grave and anxious.

"I knew you would come," he said; "she is watching for you; she has been at the window ever since we had your telegram."

"How is she?" Harvey asked, his heart beating gladly as he thought that Myrtle was longing for him at last.

"I am anxious about her; she is too quiet. You know Van Hals will be set at liberty by her pleading?"

"No!" Harvey's dismayed tone was almost ludicrous.

"Yes; she went alone to the Jew who prosecutes—she would have no help; she said he would grant to a woman's importunity what he would never yield to a man's reasoning. She succeeded, how I hardly know—but it has almost killed her."

"She is not ill?"

"She will be ill before long; the strain on the nerves and brain is too great; she is failing now, and nothing but grim resolution keeps her up; every day's delay will pay for itself in greater prostration when the time comes."

"I must take her home soon," her brother said; "the air that blows off our moor is like a draught of water to a dying man; she will be well at home."

"Perhaps," the doctor said, but shook his head with a sigh; no Devon air would breathe peace into a troubled mind.

It was as Isencraw said; Myrtle's white face at the window was the first thing Harvey saw as he neared Anton Secker's house.

"Good God! doctor, does she look like that?" the poor brother cried, catching at the doctor's arm.

"Keep steady, for Heaven's sake; don't let her see you so scared!—and yet I do not know, anything that rouses her from this lethargy may do her good; go in, as you will."

Perhaps Isencraw was right, any burst of sorrow was better than Myrtle's present rigid apathy, which yet was keen pain.

When she saw her brother's face, the trembling boyish lips that strove for calmness, and the once merry blue eyes dim with tears, Myrtle sprang forward with a moaning cry.

"You have come," she said, clasping him in her arms, "I have waited for you, Harvey, but you have come at last. Now I will go back to my own people."

It had been deemed advisable to give Van Hals no idea of his possible release. If Leon failed to keep his pledge to Myrtle, they would fight the case to the last, but exposing Kranz and Leon would not take away Rupert's guilt, and no one could safely assert what the result of the trial would be. Therefore Myrtle had not again seen her husband, and the doctor was troubled as to whether she would consent

to leave Amsterdam until the trial was over. He need not have feared any opposition.

When Harvey spoke of taking her home, she acquiesced at once, only saying she must see her child's grave.

"She has forgotten her interview with Leon, and probably her husband's imprisonment," Isencraw said to Harvey, when they were alone; "it is well, because you can take her home; but when she remembers she will suffer terribly."

Next day Harvey took her home. When she said good-by to Frau Secker she seemed troubled, and pressed her hand to her head nervously.

"I have forgotten—there is something, I am sure there is something I want to ask you to do, but I cannot think of it now—when I remember I will write. You are all so kind, and I am not ungrateful, but I want to go home and rest. Good-by!"

When she had gone, Frau Secker, with many tears, showed Isencraw a letter. She had found it in Myrtle's room under her pillow. It was addressed to her husband, "to be given to him only if he comes here to seek me," and outside the envelope she had written the date, three days back.

"I think the effort that letter cost her numbed her brain for the time," the doctor said, turning it in his hand; "I have noticed a change in her for some days."

"Shall I send the letter to her husband?" Anton Secker's wife asked, with a distressed face.

"No, do as she bids on the envelope; we have no right to go beyond her bidding."

Strict justice may have prompted the doctor's

answer, but no doubt subtler motives mingled with the primary and acknowledged one, for Isencraw was not sorry to find an excuse for keeping Rupert and Myrtle apart.

Meanwhile Van Hals waited in prison. He did not expect to see his wife again ; he thought she must despise him now she knew him to be a thief, but he did not know that pity would have covered his weakness, if she could have trusted in his love for her. Of Daria Leon he thought little ; seen in the cold stern light of reality, her passion for him lost its attractiveness, and he understood at once that hers would not be a love to endure in adversity.

For the first time in his life he faced his position, and rated himself at his just value, and the salutary exercise was full of mental strength. Day by day he saw himself more clearly in all his old, weak selfishness ; day by day he writhed more sensitively under the lash of conscience, and lamented, now that it was too late, his indifference to Myrtle. Gradually there dawned upon him a hope that in after years, by patience, and work, and self-denial, he might win some fame to lay at his wife's feet. All this seems easy enough, perhaps, but to most natures its simplicity is its difficulty. A hundred men press to success, little by little, from point to point—for one who has the strength to rise again after failure. To have been beaten down in the battle—worse still, to have been found a coward in the fight, and from this depth of shame and contempt to struggle to victory, this is harder than they know who have not failed. It may not be good to fail, but it is better to fail than not to strive ; and once down, with the crowd coming on,

who shall say but he who has tried it how hard it is to rise?

On the day before that fixed for the trial, Rupert paced his room slowly, picturing the next day's ordeal, in order to gain the strength which is attainable when the mind is prepared for what is to come. The warder announced a visitor, and Van Hals sat down wearily. It would not be his wife, and he preferred to see no one else. The heavy man's tread that could be heard in the bare corridor was unfamiliar to the prisoner, and he was surprised when Leon entered. Rupert's intense hatred for the Jew had cooled, as he recognized that he himself had been his greatest enemy; but he could not see Leon without some anger toward the man who had betrayed him.

"You have heard from your friends, I presume?" the money-lender asked, after waiting in vain for Van Hals to speak.

"Have I any friends?" the sculptor asked bitterly. "I have heard nothing, which is an argument against their existence."

The Jew smiled grimly.

"They do not trust me," he said, "and are afraid to raise your hopes; or else they think the uncertainty of law may go against them. However, even a Jew keeps his word sometimes, and I have pledged mine not to prosecute."

Van Hals was deadly pale, but he asked as quietly as he could what would result from Leon's pledge.

"Simply that you will be free. Some forms will no doubt be gone through,—I do not understand legal matters,—but no one will accuse you of any crime;

there will be no witnesses and no prosecution. By to-morrow evening, I imagine, you will be at liberty."

Van Hals looked long at his enemy.

"If this is true," he said at last, "I suppose I ought to thank you, but after my experience of your friendship you will excuse me for imagining that you are merciful not for my sake only."

"Not for your sake at all," said the Jew lightly; "I yield to the pleading of a lady."

"A lady!" Van Hals said, below his breath; and then the conviction breaking upon him that the Jew referred to his daughter, he exclaimed, "The Señora Daria!"

"What other woman's intercession would move me?" Leon asked evasively, and Van Hals bowed his head.

"Will you convey my thanks to her?" he said a little proudly. He knew that she had given him the greatest boon he could ask, but for his life he could not feel grateful.

The Jew looked at him keenly; he saw the man was changed, and knew by a subtle instinct that his old debtor no longer feared him, but he could not understand the perceptible difference in his manner when speaking of Daria. It was not shame, for that he could have understood; it was rather a kind of cold indifference, which made itself chiefly felt because it produced in Leon a sense of annoyance at having allowed him to think that Daria interceded for him.

The Jew was nervous and unlike himself, and angry that he had come to see this man who had once been dependent on his favor, but who now—in prison—

despised him. He rose to leave his enemy, over whom his power was gone.

"My daughter's marriage with the Marquis de —— is fixed for the autumn; in Spain our ancestors at domestic festivities were accustomed to free their prisoners. I like to keep up old customs, that is all."

"I wish the Señora every happiness," Van Hals said, without changing color, and with as courtly a manner as if he had stood a guest in Leon's house. The Jew bit his lip as he turned away; he was sorry that he had visited the prison.

The two men never met again.

Leon kept his word.

When Van Hals was led into the place reserved for prisoners on trial, one rapid glance showed him that Myrtle was not present, and he never lifted his eyes again until he heard that he was at liberty.

Free, but not innocent, the shame of it was harder to bear in the open street than in the cell of his prison, and Van Hals lingered until evening before he made his way to his studio. No one had been there in his absence, dust lay over everything, a window-frame was broken by a stone, and a half-exhausted bird which had found its way in, but could not escape, fluttered feebly round the room. Rupert caught it in his hand and set it free, and then looked round the room in which he stood for the last time. He must begin all over again, a harder task than he realized as he resolved to try it—that he did so resolve made success possible.

He lifted the covering from the old statue of Myrtle with the doves, and looked long and earnestly at the still, grave face. He remembered how his Italian

rival had spoken of the sorrow hidden in its curves and lines, and he pressed his lips against the cold, unresponsive hand.

"Oh, wife," he said, half aloud, "is it possible you can ever forgive?"

He waited until it was dark, and then went to the rooms where he had left Myrtle.

The key he still carried in his pocket opened the door, but the place was empty.

The woman who lived upstairs told him that Myrtle was with Herr Anton Secker.

It was natural she should be there; in fact, he fancied he had heard it, only he had forgotten—but it would be hard to seek her among friends.

Slowly he made his way to the cigar-merchant's shop, and stood in the darkness opposite the door, irresolute and ashamed.

The long low room was full of men, talking, not lightly with laughter and joking, but gravely in groups of two and three. The hot blood burned in Rupert's cheeks, for he knew they spoke of him. He had seen placards in the news shops as he came along; his discharge and Leon's inexplicable conduct would be the only subjects of comment to-night. He could not go in. He looked at the house door, but to enter there he must ring and wait, and the white steps were fully lighted by a street lamp, and could be easily seen by those near the door of the shop. So he waited. Men came out and passed him, and he could hear his own name; the lights in the house were put out, it was getting late; about a dozen men still lingered talking to Anton Secker, but there were no fresh comers. Suddenly it struck Van Hals that sooner or later

he must look men in the face, and why not now? Before his resolution could cool he crossed the road, and entered by the old familiar door. There was an indescribable stir as the men turned and looked at him. His hat was in his hand, his face was changed and old, the moisture stood in large drops on his white forehead and lips. His mouth moved in a vain effort to ask for Myrtle, but no sound could be heard. Anton pointed to the inner room, and all fell back as he passed, not avoiding him, but simply respecting his sorrow and his shame. Just as he reached the glass door behind which Frau Secker sat, a boy, not more than eighteen or so, to whom Van Hals had shown some kindness, caught his hand and wrung it.

"Don't," Rupert said hoarsely, as if he suffered physical pain, "I cannot bear it."

Then he pushed open the door and went in.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FRAU SECKER knitted fast, with indignant trembling fingers, but her eyes never left Rupert's face.

"May I see my wife?" Van Hals asked humbly.

"She is gone," uttered the sternly compressed lips of Anton's wife.

"Gone?"

"Her brother took her home with him a week ago."

"Harvey! I had forgotten; but of course he would come for her. It is right, and best for her."

But the keen disappointment overwhelmed Rupert, whose whole soul was set on his wife's forgiveness, and he buried his face in his hands. Presently he looked up, only to meet the inexorable eyes that had never relaxed their gaze.

"She did not wait to know my sentence?" he said sadly. "You must be surprised to see me here—or has Leon explained?"

"She never doubted he would keep his word, so there was no need to wait. Besides, she was ill."

Rupert looked bewildered.

"Did you know I was to be discharged?" he asked.

"I knew this, that your wife faced the Jew all alone, and never let him rest until he pledged his word you should be free. How she did it, I hardly understand; she found out something about him, and held it over him, and he dare not say no."

"My wife? did my wife do this? Then she must have cared for me."

The last words were spoken so low that Frau Secker could not hear them.

"You may well wonder," she said, knitting furiously; "few wives would have done as much. Her boy's death well-nigh broke what heart she had left, after hearing all the talk about her husband and the Jewess."

"Good God! Frau Secker, you women can be cruel. Tell me truly, had my wife heard this—this fools' gossip?"

"Aye, that had she; and seen, what, I do not know; but something the night before her boy died that nearly killed her too. She saw you somewhere on her

way to fetch the doctor—you and that bold Jewess woman ; she said it in her sleep, poor lamb ! many a night—you best know what she meant. I told Dr. Isencraw, but he never dared to ask her, and now she is ill, and her brain is gone, and it will be a mercy when God takes her."

Anton's wife was pitiless. The man before her had taken his pleasure while his wife suffered ; it was his turn to suffer now.

" Where is Isencraw ? " Rupert asked, with a terrible look on his face.

" At home, I suppose ; but if you are going, here is a letter for you. She wrote it before her head went, poor dear ! "

Van Hals caught at the letter, turned to go out through the shop, but remembered.

He could not face his old friends now. He pushed Frau Secker aside, as if he did not see her, tore through the house like a madman, as the poor woman told Anton afterward, unbarred the street door and let himself out, leaving the wind to blow wildly through the house.

He walked fast until he found a quiet spot where he could read his letter. He opened it under a lamp. It was very short.

" My dear husband," it began ; " when you read this you will be out of prison, and I shall be at home. I have loved you so well that I would have died to save you ; perhaps for this very reason I cannot live for you while I know your heart is not my own. Our boy's grave is with his grandfather ; care for it a little for his sake, and his mother's."

That was all. Its reticence smote him as no reproaches would have done; he must follow and find her, and tell her at least of his love; forgiveness he must leave with her.

But first to see Isencraw. Van Hals called a passing cab, and drove to the doctor's house. It was midnight, but Isencraw was still up, reading a letter from Harvey Prosser.

Rupert's haggard face roused no pity in the breast of the man who despised him. The doctor thought bitterly of the night when Van Hals and he had carried Myrtle between them into that very room, and it seemed to him as though Rupert's punishment had been light indeed.

For Myrtle was dying; by this time was dead, in all probability, and Isencraw's eyes again sought Harvey's letter where, in schoolboy hand, her sufferings were written.

Rupert's dry lips parted—he pointed to the letter.

"You had better have let her drown that night," Isencraw said almost brutally. "You saved her life; did you think you bought it to do with as you would?"

"Is she dead?" Myrtle's husband asked, very low.

Isencraw pushed Harvey's letter to him, and pointed to where at the top of a page were the words: "Van Hals has killed her."

The boy who wrote them believed as he wrote that they would be true indeed before a day had passed; and the man who showed them honestly thought that as he showed them Myrtle lay dead in her father's house; there was no gleam of hope in his mind that

the fever which burned her brain would spare her life. Why should the man who had made her suffer be told to hope?

So Isencraw watched him, dreading lest he should turn the page and read that his wife still lived, judging him remorselessly, as we mortals judge each other, punishing as we punish, blindly, mercilessly, and therefore not with justice.

And the sculptor never doubted.

He read the words until they seared his heart; then he looked once at Isencraw, and with a strange stumbling and a pitiful gesture of the hand, groped his way, bareheaded, out into the night.

All night he wandered on the outskirts of the city, and when morning dawned he had taken a resolution. He had some money,—not much,—the result of his last commissions, in a bank; this he drew, and then, leaving directions with a broker to sell all in his studio,—except the statue of Myrtle, which was to follow him,—he went to Paris, hiding himself in one of its poorest streets, with the confidence of security which can only be felt in a city.

Then he set about a work, the design for which had come into his mind during that solitary night when he had seen nothing but the arch of summer sky, vague and pure, the dim masses of shade by the canals, and his dead wife's face. His imagination was filled with her presence. He had only to close his eyes to see her clearly defined; every curve of her cheek and lip, every line of her profile and brow was before him as if she were with him still.

He had heard of such visions coming to sculptors

and painters ; he had not dreamed that in himself the trained eye and brain, inspired by imagination, could make memory a real presence.

Rupert van Hals seemed to have laid his lower nature by ; as the old painters drew the Madonna upon their knees, almost seeing a sacred vision in their bare room, so he modeled his lost wife's face with the reverence of his whole being, and with no thought of fame to soil his work.

He had chosen a long room on the ground floor of a poor house, in a quarter of Paris where many students lived. All day he worked at the clay, or sketched from memory any point in face or form that came before him with peculiar vividness. He drank little wine, and lived chiefly on fruit and bread to keep his imagination pure. In the evening, when the street was apt to be noisy, he locked his door and went out, choosing lonely spots where he might dream and think. Here he calmed his mind and prepared himself for the sleep which he deemed necessary for the next day's work : and here first he remembered his child, and determined to add the boy's figure to the work. Where Myrtle had held the doves to her breast she now held her boy ; the child himself was sheltered in her robe, but the mother's hands, modeled with thoughtful care, clasped him quietly—his head leaned against her neck. The lines of the figure and drapery were grave and simple, the feet were covered by folds of the robe. Kneeling half behind the mother was the figure of a man ; his back was bowed, his head bent on his hands, the face was hidden. It seemed as though one who had sinned and suffered crept near, unknown to her who stood there happy in

her calm and stately motherhood, and hoped to be forgiven.

This was Rupert's conception of his wife and child, when it was completed after weeks of labor. How long he worked at it he did not know; he took no count of time. One wall of his room held a charcoal drawing of his design, and at this he worked sometimes until its simple grandeur filled him with a strange and awful joy.

At last it became necessary that he should earn some money, for his small store was nearly exhausted.

Overhead, as he worked, Van Hals had often heard the tread of a man pacing backward and forward in his room, a lonely man he fancied, for no friends ever came to see him.

One day this man, coming downstairs, twisted his ankle, and sat down, shouting for help.

Rupert opened his door, first covering his model, and asked the man into his room.

He was a French medical student, he said, poor as a Seine rat, and pining for speech with his fellows.

"For weeks," he said, his black eyes gleaming with merriment, "I have been planning how to get into your room. I have paced up and down over your head until I can afford no more shoe-leather, in hopes that you would request me to cease the disturbance; anything for speech with the hermit, as we all call you."

"As you all call me!" Rupert exclaimed. "I thought no one knew I existed."

"My friend, all the students have bets upon you, as far up the street as No. 14—there they have another curiosity, and won't bet about ours. How-

ever, only this morning I resolved to fall downstairs noisily but harmlessly, and I have twisted my ankle."

Van Hals did not resent the Frenchman's visit, and it seemed, after all his solitude, good to exchange words with this stranger.

With genuine awe on his merry face, the student told him, after a cold bandage had been wound round his ankle, that he had been prompted by curiosity in invading his room.

"I could see from outside that you were an artist, and the smell of wet clay told me you were a sculptor; but pardon me, sir, if I trespass, the work on which you labor is not for a stranger's eyes if that is the sketch of it." And he pointed to the charcoal on the wall.

But Rupert was like a man on a desert island—the first stranger who spoke to him seemed a friend, although a friend might have been treated as a stranger.

"Some day I should like to show you my work," he said, "but it is unfinished, and to me the subject is so sacred that no eyes but my own must see it incomplete. I have other work here, if you care to see." And he showed the Frenchman some small heads finished with delicate skill.

The medical student was enthusiastic; and poured his own griefs into his new friend's ear. The longing of his life had been to be a modeler, sculpture had been beyond his purse and his ambition, and "Terre cuite" would have satisfied him. But fate, in the form of a rich uncle, stepped in, and he was a medical student.

His uncle was a patron of art, and told his nephew

decidedly that he would never model, and when he talked about the beauty of the human form, sent him to study anatomy. But now the generous, light-hearted fellow's enthusiasm centered itself on his wonderfully discovered friend, and transferred to him his ambition. In a week he insisted on showing some of Rupert's work to his rich uncle. The old Frenchman knew talent when he saw it, and bought all his nephew brought to him.

Weeks went by; Van Hals could sell enough to keep himself and his friend, and Émile Rosé did not decline assistance. No student ever did, he said, laughing; they were a brotherhood and had all things in common; besides, he deserved his commission for an introduction to so favorable an art patron. Rupert was cheered by Émile's honest flattery and kindly chatter; grief had not made him morose, though he kept his name of the Hermit, and saw only one or two of Rosé's friends. When they asked his name, he said that at present he would be called Rupert Drock, a Dutchman.

One day Émile came in full of excitement; his uncle had insisted on coming to the studio. Van Hals hesitated. His work was nearly finished; even he was almost satisfied; it was time to submit it to other opinion. He had heard enough of M. Bernard, Rosé's uncle, to know that he was a fine critic, so, almost to Émile's surprise, he consented to the visit.

Next morning M. Bernard came; a little delicate-featured man, with black eyes and a beautifully shaped head. He bowed to Rupert gravely, and then at once asked permission to see the life-size figure he understood M. Drock to be modeling.

Van Hals uncovered his work with a reverent, trembling hand; then turned to the window, and stood looking out into the street.

Presently he heard a movement behind him; the Frenchman stood uncovered before the sculptor.

"Sir," he said, his whole face full of emotion, "the work is an inspiration. You may ask of Fame what you will, and here, in Paris, it will be given to you."

Van Hals made no answer; surging up in his heart was the joy of having conquered, followed by a stab of bitterest agony that she whose love had inspired him was not there to share his triumph. He tried to speak, but could not; to walk, but a mist was before him; when he came to himself he was on the floor at the foot of his wife's statue, Émile Rosé was kneeling by his side, and M. Bernard had gone.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In Amsterdam, meanwhile, Daria Leon was married with much magnificence to the French marquis her father had chosen. Her marriage was the talk of the town for some days, and it revived briefly the remembrance of the man whom society had seen her delight to honor; while the mystic diamonds, forty-two in number, clasping her throat in double row, were the subject of many whispers. Leon's clemency at the time of the trial had perplexed all who heard of it, and since no one gave him credit for merciful forbearance, a story had grown up, and gathered strength

with constant repetition, to the effect that Leon—obstinately set upon obtaining the missing stone—had first bribed Van Hals to take it, and then turned and betrayed him. There was a grain of truth in the tale, and it was not inconsistent with the character of either man, and it held its own; but those who believed it, whispered that the diamonds on the bride's neck carried a curse with them, and that if you looked aright into the talismanic center of the recovered stone you would see a dead woman's face—with other fancies that, happily, never came to Daria's ears.

She was paler than she used to be, and prouder, but as beautiful as ever, and her father decked her like a king's daughter for her marriage. When it was over she left with her husband for a European tour, and Leon stayed behind to count his gains, and exult in the success of his plans, alone and lonely.

Isencraw, having ventured to take the threads of human destiny into his hands, found that they had a knack of cutting his flesh cruelly. He was uneasy about Rupert, and felt some remorse at having allowed him to believe that his wife was dead. True, the doctor himself thought she would die, and also thought that death was better for her than life with Van Hals; but when he heard, as he did through the Seckers, that Myrtle, after lying at death's door for many weeks, was feebly tightening her hold on life again, he began to wish that any hand but his had put the husband and wife apart. He wrote to Harvey, but Harvey, more jealous of Rupert than Isencraw was, cut the last link between his sister and the country where sorrow had found her, and would not answer. Of Rupert the doctor could find no trace; so, having

honestly inquired at the sculptor's old haunts, and having written unsuccessfully to a friend in Rome, Isencraw let himself rest again, and when conscience spoke, put his hand upon her mouth.

But if the doctor flattered himself he had done with Fate, Fate had not done with the doctor. In the spring Isencraw went to Paris to attend some surgical lectures, illustrating a new discovery in science.

By an accident he happened to sit during three lectures almost in the same place; but as his whole thought was engrossed in the subject, and every power of his mind directed to accurate understanding of the language of the French surgeon who gave the lecture, he did not notice that a young man sat beside him, who certainly studied his neighbor as much as that neighbor studied science.

At the third lecture something was said that he did not understand, and carried away by a desire to miss nothing, the little Dutch doctor rose in his seat, and with an execrable accent, implored the lecturer to explain. It was done at once with the courtesy of a French gentleman, and Isencraw sat down again. When the lecture was over, the young man next to him said, with a sigh so deep as to be almost ludicrous.

"I wish you would give me lessons in enthusiasm, in return for lessons in French."

"You think I require the French lessons, then?" asked Isencraw, amused.

"Pardon, monsieur; my despair made me forget my politeness. Your French seems to me perfect, if the accent could be slightly amended."

"Ah, mine is book French," Isencraw answered; "and I dare say yours is book enthusiasm."

"Not even that! I hate bones and skeletons. Come and let us dine together, and we will improve my politeness and your accent. You must excuse my speaking to you, but when I have sat by a man three times, I consider that an introduction."

"Where shall we dine?" the doctor asked, won by his companion's friendliness; "I did not know I had had the pleasure of your society before—the lecture shuts out all surroundings."

"Does it really? Now to me it is the signal for a regular stampede of thought in all directions but the right. We will dine at a café I will show you, if you please. They allow me a free dinner once a week on condition of my introducing a friend."

Isencraw laughed. The young man beside him was at least candid.

"Will you be my guest?" said the doctor.

"With the greatest pleasure. You observe I did not ask you to be mine, for this admirable reason, that I have not a sou in the world. Never mind, to-night a Dutch friend of mine pays me a little sum he allows me, and we will sup together. By-the-by, forgive me, but you are Dutch, I fancy?"

"I have the honor."

"There, I regain my self-respect, and feel at liberty to ask you to exhange cards—my name is Émile Rosé."

"And mine is Isencraw," laughed the doctor, seating himself at a small table, and bidding his friend order what he would. "My French is not only out of books, but medical books, and I cannot say what I want for dinner."

Rosé soon ordered a liberal repast, not held back by any consideration about the bill.

"Why does my being a Dutchman restore your self-respect?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, only because it shows me that my judgment has not gone hopelessly mad. You look like a Dutchman—or a German, I was not sure which; and your name is Dutch, or at least I suppose so,—at any rate it is not French,—and I guess that you are Dutch, and I am right. To tell the truth, I rather did it to spite a friend of mine."

"To spite him; how?"

"Well, he is a Dutchman, or he says so at least; and his name is Dutch—Drock he calls himself; but"—and the young student gave a long whistle expressive of absolute astonishment—"you shall see him before you leave Paris and judge; he looks as much like a Dutchman as you look like a Parisian! He has a poet's face, long hair, gray on the temples, tossed back like—well, like an angel's flying against the wind; a mouth all curves of imagination, and yet with a pinch of sorrow in it at the corners, a chin like a woman's, and eyes like a wounded stag's—and he says he is a Dutchman!"

The Frenchman turned his merry black eyes on Isencraw, who returned his look with a new expression in his face.

"Were you not wishing for enthusiasm just now?" he asked smiling; "it seems to me you can be enthusiastic over Dutchmen, if not over anatomy. Tell me, is this an old friend of yours?"

"No, not old in time—but we know each other very well. It is he who makes me the allowance I spoke of."

"Ah! he is rich then?" The doctor's tone had something of disappointment in it.

"Poor as a rat when I first met him; but you see he is a sculptor——"

The doctor uttered an exclamation in his native tongue.

"Pardon! did you speak?" said Rosé.

"No, no! I beg you to go on. What did you say your friend's name is?"

"Drock, Rupert Drock. Do you know him?"

"I am not sure, not by that name at least. You say he is a sculptor?"

"Yes; a genius in fact. You must know I have an uncle rolling in riches, and unfortunately living with but one object in life—the patronage of art and artists."

"Unfortunately?" questioned Isencraw.

"For me, his nephew, I mean; since his wealth, which it would suit me admirably to spend for him, is dammed up from my little river in order that it may flood the adjoining country. However, some of it is filtering through intervening and friendly fields into my dried-up course. But enough of metaphor, I ought to have been a poet! I introduced my sculptor to my uncle—my uncle went into raptures over my sculptor, with this charming result, orders flow in rapidly, and my Dutchman,—if he is a Dutchman,—being the soul of honor, gives me a small commission on every sale."

Isencraw's face was graver than the light chatter of his companion warranted. He had no doubt he had found Van Hals. The change of name was no disguise to anyone who remembered the farm at Drock. The question remained whether Van Hals would consent to see him.

"I know this friend of yours," he said, after a pause, "and I should be glad to meet him, but I am not sure whether he will care to see me. Does he seem in trouble?"

"Poor fellow," answered the medical student, "he was troubled enough when he came to Paris, and even now he is not very merry; but he is ambitious, and success is sure to him in the future."

Isencraw shook his head, doubtfully.

"He was always ambitious, and sure of success," he said.

"Ah, but now it is only the success that is sure—he is not," answered the Frenchman. "He is wonderfully humble for a genius, and my uncle is convinced he will be famous. You see, poor Drock lost his wife suddenly—as no doubt you know; and he did what to me is a wonderful thing: he modeled her from memory. He seems to have seen her perpetually before him, so that he modeled more from a vision than a remembrance, and the result is perfection. When my uncle saw the clay, he said it must be put into marble, if Paris starved for it; and when poor Drock heard these words,—that is exactly what my uncle said,—he fainted, and I was called in to help. When M. Bernard, that is my uncle, says a thing he does it, and he got a studio for Drock and ordered the purest marble to be had for money—and there my Dutchman works night and day, with a light in his eyes that would bring the tears to yours to look at."

"Can you take me to him?"

"Yes, when dinner is over—it is a sin to leave dishes like these. But first you must come to my

room, and I will show you Drock's old workshop. It is worth seeing."

An hour later Isencraw and Rosé stood at the door of the house where Rupert had modeled Myrtle and the child.

"This is his room," said the student, opening a door on the ground floor; "it is just as he left it, M. Bernard will not have it touched. That sheet stretched across the blackened ceiling was used to reflect light on his work. Here on the wall you see a sketch in charcoal of the figures of his dead wife and boy; my uncle had size put over it to preserve the lines, but it is a little rubbed."

"It is a beautiful idea," Isencraw said.

"Yes; Drock told me he tried hard to model the child's face, but he could never see it as he saw the mother's; he could recall it to a certain extent, but not as he did his wife's face, so he covered the boy with the folds of his mother's robe, and only showed his arm and the hand clasped in hers. That is the only thing done from life—he found a round-armed child in the street one day and brought it in."

All doubt as to the hand which had worked here vanished as Isencraw looked on Myrtle's outlined face.

"I should like to see her husband again," he said aloud.

Rosé looked surprised.

"Ah! you knew madame also? Come upstairs a moment, and then we will go."

In the room above, which even Émile's "little commission" had not yet enabled him to change, were two or three rough studies by Van Hals, and on a side table a model in terra cotta of Rupert's great work.

"He made this and gave it me," Rosé explained, "on condition that I would never sell it. The marble he is working on now is not to be sold, only exhibited. M. Bernard and he had a dispute about it, but my uncle had to yield. Drock said it would be sacrilege to sell it, and I fancy M. Bernard agreed with him."

Rupert's new studio was not far off. Rosé led the way up a few wide steps, and knocked at a door; it opened by a spring touched inside, and Isencraw found himself in a small vestibule.

"Stay," he said, as Rosé would have passed on; "I have no right to take him by surprise; ask if he will see me."

In a few minutes the Frenchman returned. "He will see you—but alone. He banishes me while you are there. *Au revoir!* I shall come back in an hour."

Then Isencraw went forward, and saw Van Hals standing by his work, waiting for him.

The two men took each other by the hand in silence. Rupert's face had a new dignity, and the doctor noted the streaks of gray in his hair. He had never looked nobler; his sculptor's blouse added width to his chest and massiveness to his whole form; the simple gravity of his manner won respect; and the sorrow to be read in his mouth and eyes compelled pity.

At first he asked, and Isencraw told, how Rosé had met the doctor; but after a time the two went back to the center of the room where, side by side, on two great stones, were the clay model and the block of marble, already far advanced to completion. The large window shed a clear white light into the studio, and the slender shadow of the pointing instrument fell alike across the marble and the clay.

Even Isencraw, unimaginative and prosaic of temperament, was enthralled by the simple beauty of the conception. He took off his round, shining glasses, and passed his hand across his eyes.

In silence the two looked at the woman each had loved; and into the little doctor's heart stole a tender pity for the man beside him, who had stumbled in the fight, but had struggled to his feet again so bravely.

How would it be, Isencraw thought, if he who had parted the husband and wife should bring them together again? and as the idea strengthened into resolution, the doctor gave a cry of enthusiasm, and pushed his hand through his short colorless hair, as he always did when excited. Then he checked himself, and flushed crimson as a schoolboy might, who had suddenly laughed in church.

Van Hals, thinking he was nervous, spoke of other matters.

"Do you know the amount of my debts in Amsterdam, doctor?"

"No; I have heard various sums named, but they are probably exaggerated. Can I help you in any way in Holland?" asked Isencraw, relieved at the sculptor's return to ordinary topics.

"If you will take the trouble to find out my poor creditors and pay them, not letting them know where I am, I shall be grateful; the richer ones and the Jews can wait."

Presently they spoke of Harvey.

"I wish," Rupert said, after a pause, "that you would go to Devonshire and see Harvey, and my wife's mother. Is it asking too much? I cannot go—

nothing would make me leave my work now, and also they might not wish to see me. But—I have a fancy that his mother would like our boy laid by her; and I should be glad, Isencraw,—if you can gather it,—for a leaf or flower from her grave; it would be like something of hers, and I have nothing. Then come back here and tell me."

The words were simple enough, and the tone was at times almost calm, but the agony of the man who gathered all his strength to speak them quite unnerved the little Dutch doctor.

His resolution strengthened. He hurried to the door on pretense of speaking to Rosé, and screwed his little eyes up tightly, shaking the tears from his eyelashes with a jerk of the head, came back and wrung Rupert's hand, then turned again to the door and stopped.

"I will go when I leave Paris," he blurted out. "I must finish my lectures. And I will come back, as you say. Forgive me, Van Hals. I judged you harshly once, but as long as I live I will never judge again."

He pulled the door to, and was gone, and Rupert turned to his work.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SPRING was in Paris; the chestnuts were out in the boulevards; down by the river the caged birds, hung for sale in the sunshine, had been shaking their little throats all day with joyous singing; the last steamer had landed its pleasure seekers at the quay, and the

last train bringing passengers from England was in at the Gare du Nord. A cab, with a small portmanteau outside, held an eager little man with fair hair and a round Dutch face, who watched a woman by his side rather anxiously. It was Dr. Isencraw, who brought Myrtle van Hals to her husband.

It had been a strange errand undertaken by the doctor, and one which had made him feel humbler than he ever thought to feel. When he first took those threads of destiny into his rash hands, and, like a small Jove, punished the sinning mortal, Van Hals, he had been sure that the punishment was for his ultimate good. But he forgot that in punishing the guilty, the innocent must suffer; it never occurred to him that Myrtle would pine for her lost husband.

Her long illness, followed by a weary convalescence, must have left her weak and thin—for this he prepared himself, but not for the questioning eyes, the quivering lips, the trembling hands, that greeted him when he reached Red Hill Farm.

The agony of the long winter none knew but the silent woman who, too proud to speak to mother or brother of her sorrow, ate her heart out in bitter silence, and hungered for word or sign from the man she had saved and still loved.

When Isencraw made her understand that her husband believed her dead, and loved her as he had never loved her before, he was afraid that joy would have gone as near to killing her as grief had done—and even now when she suffered herself to be taken to Paris, it was with much secret trembling lest the little doctor, who could not know Rupert as she did, might be mistaken. Her brother was not with her; it had

been a sore point with Harvey that she could leave him again, and Myrtle herself, not sure in her heart how Rupert would receive her, felt that she would rather meet her husband alone. So she and the doctor came to Paris together.

The sunset glow still lingered in the dusky sky, but in the narrow streets the lamps were lighted, and the shop windows sparkled in strong contrast to the dark figures of the holiday people who stood to gaze, or walked rapidly by.

The cab containing Myrtle and the doctor followed slowly in the line of vehicles going toward the center of Paris from the station; the sturdy Flemish horse planted broad hoofs warily on the round stones, and Myrtle's seeking eyes watched at the window.

The rough stones ceased, the jolting and clatter were hushed as the *fiacre* glided on to the asphalt. In a narrow street a carriage blocked the way; and while they waited Myrtle saw an open door, a flight of warmly carpeted and lighted steps, and on great placards outside:

LA MÈRE.

RUPERT VAN HALS.

Entree 2 Francs.

She touched the doctor's arm.

"I must get out, doctor; I will see it first—the statue. Then I shall know."

"My dear friend, what would you know? It is

beautiful; he will show you himself," remonstrated Isencraw.

"Ah, you cannot understand. Tell the man we will get out. I must see for myself."

Myrtle's joy and hope at the prospect of meeting her husband were fast fading into fear. How would it be if, after all, she were not wanted. If he were glad of freedom, or if he only thought he loved her while he believed her dead? If she could see the face he had carved as hers she would know more than the friendly doctor could tell her.

So they stopped, and the great carriage in front of them moved on, and Rupert's wife steadied her trembling feet to climb the stair.

Isencraw paid the man at the door, who—after protesting with many gestures that the room was empty, that the exhibition would close in five minutes, and monsieur would pay his money for nothing—shrugged his shoulders and let them pass, marveling in his thrifty French mind at such throwing away of four good francs.

Myrtle's footfall made no sound on the carpeted stair as she climbed slowly, her heavy traveling cloak dragging at her weary body, her ungloved hand clinging to the silken rope slung to mitigate the steepness.

At the top she paused; a velvet portière hung before her, on her right was a small alcove with a cushioned seat. Beyond, she caught the gleam of electric light, through gaps in the hangings.

After all she would not be alone. Someone was speaking.

Ah!

A high, clear voice, not self-asserting, only calmly

accustomed to deference, the voice of one who knew that when she spoke all men listened.

Myrtle knew it. The voice of her who had been Daria Leon.

So she had come for this! Her quickened senses seemed to recognize the faint and exquisite perfume which hung on the silken garments of the Jewess. Daria was there. And Rupert. How they had met she knew not. Whether the Jew's daughter came as art patron merely, or to seek once more in Paris the man she had sought in Amsterdam, mattered little, the bitterness lay in the simple fact that they were together and alone.

The wife's knees shook under her, with a faint moan, like the sigh of a dying creature, she crouched on the cushions in the recess, and "abandoned hope."

The clear voice spoke, every syllable distinct, a ringing note in each question.

"Ah, 'La Mère'? a homely subject, if somewhat hackneyed; and pretty, though a trifle *bourgeois*. The model—do I know her? Your wife? I forget; did I ever see her? You are silent, Herr van Hals—you do the honors badly."

"I ask your pardon, madame," answered Rupert's voice, "it is late, and I did not expect anyone else would come to-night; I am not here to do the honors, as you say."

"Well, sculptor mine, being here, you will stay. Daria Leon was obeyed once, and the marquise commands no less. 'La Mère' is good—it will make your name. But, tell me, what is the meaning of the crouching figure who hides his face in her robe. How do you interpret it, Herr Sculptor?"

"It is interpreted as he wills who sees it, madame," said Van Hals.

"Homage? shame? penitence? which of these would you have us see?"

"All three, madame, are in the heart of him who kneels."

"Well, you know best, but it mars the conception to my mind; the mother's eyes are for her child, what cares she who kneels at her feet? There you are true to nature, I grant; women with the child-love highly developed have no passion to spare for man."

The voice rang scornfully. Betraying mortification in spite of the scorn; the sculptor did not speak.

"Your wife is dead, they tell me, Herr van Hals?" The voice sounded cruel and cold, and there was only silence in reply.

And the living wife crouched closer into the darkness, and a feeble flame of hope fluttered in its ashes and began to warm her heart.

"Well, you are wedded to Fame now, and I congratulate you."

The speaker was close to the portière; a strong hand flung the velvet curtain aside, and held it for the marquise to pass; and peering from the darkness, Myrtle saw her husband's face.

"Yes, madame," Van Hals said, looking straight into the eyes of the Jewess, "fame has come at last, and perhaps wealth that waits on fame; yet I would give both, and my life with them, for one touch of my wife's hand, and one word from her forgiving lips."

Daria shivered, and her face was very white.

"So," she muttered, "the English girl conquers, only she is dead."

The sculptor led her to her carriage, and bowed with studied deference as the lady entered it, then with a sigh went back slowly and wearily up the steps.

At the top stood Isencraw.

"Doctor, you have come? How long you have been away!" He laid his hand on Isencraw's arm. "You have seen her grave? You can tell me?"

"No, I did not see her grave," Isencraw answered, holding back his friend as he would have passed on.

Rupert turned to him.

"Why do you look at me so? Your eyes hold a secret—there are tears on your cheek! You did not see her grave? My God! Isencraw," he cried, with a strong cry, "Myrtle is not dead?"

"No," Isencraw said, the tears running down his beaming face, "she is not dead, and she forgives. And she is here. Go in and find out for yourself."

So Isencraw brought happiness to the woman he loved, though not as he would have chosen to bring it.

The meeting between the husband and wife after their long and strange parting can hardly be told in words. To Rupert the wonder and awe of it, colored by joy and shadowed by self-reproach, were overwhelming; while Myrtle in her weakness could only cling to her husband and let peace flood her heart.

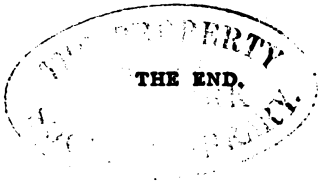
He, silent, save when he pleaded brokenly for forgiveness, held his lost wife, and thought of a future which should bring her happiness at last; she, counting all sorrow as nothing for his sake, and reading the

new nobleness in the face of him she loved, "wished naught done undone in the past."

An hour later Rupert came out to the stair head, and called with almost a boyish shout:

"Isencraw! doctor! where are you? Come and see my wife. Isencraw!"

But Dr. Isencraw had gone.



THE END.

BUCKRAM SERIES. 75c. each.

OUT OF BOUNDS.
Being the Adventures of an Unadventurous Young Man. By A. GARRY.

A MAN AND HIS WOMANKIND.
A novel. By NORA VYNNÉ.

SIR QUIXOTE OF THE MOORS.
A Scotch Romance. By JOHN BUCHAN.

LADY BONNIE'S EXPERIMENT.
A quaint pastoral. By TIGHE HOPKINS.

KAFIR STORIES.
Tales of adventure. By WM. CHAS. SCULLY.

THE MASTER-KNOT
And "Another Story." By CONOVER DUFF.

THE TIME MACHINE.
The Story of an Invention. By H. G. WELLS.

THE PRISONER OF ZENDA.
By ANTHONY HOPE. A stirring romance.

THE INDISCRETION OF THE DUCHESS.
By ANTHONY HOPE.

TENEMENT TALES OF NEW YORK.
By J. W. SULLIVAN.

SLUM STORIES OF LONDON. (*Neighbors of Ours.*)
By H. W. NEVINSON.

THE WAYS OF YALE.
Sketches, mainly humorous. By HENRY A. BEERS.

A SUBURBAN PASTORAL.
American stories. By HENRY A. BEERS.

JACK O'DOON.
An American novel. By MARIA BEALE.

QUAKER IDYLS.
By MRS. S. M. H. GARDNER.

A MAN OF MARK.
A South American tale. By ANTHONY HOPE.

SPORT royal.
And Other Stories. By ANTHONY HOPE.

THE DOLLY DIALOGUES.
By ANTHONY HOPE.

A CHANGE OF AIR.
By ANTHONY HOPE. With portrait.

JOHN INGERFIELD.
A love tragedy. By JEROME K. JEROME.

HENRY HOLT & CO., NEW YORK.

THE CRITIC: "*May be classed with 'The Prisoner of Zenda,' and shares with that story the unabated interest from first page to last, and the superb handling of the romantic and adventurous.*"

THE INDISCRETION OF THE DUCHESS.

By Anthony Hope.

Author of "The Prisoner of Zenda."

NINTH EDITION. **Buckram Series. 75c.**

The Nation: "It returns to the vein of 'The Prisoner of Zenda,' but in no way repeats that story. . . Nineteenth-century adventures though they are, they are told with an old-time air of romance that gives them the fascination of an earlier day; an air of good faith, almost of religious chivalry, gives reality to their extravagance. . . Marks Mr. Hope as a wit, if he were not a romancer."

The Atlantic Monthly: "Is as brimful of incidents, as rapid in movement, and as entertainingly improbable [as 'Zenda'] . . . Will be read at a sitting by a multitude of romance lovers."

The Dial: "Displays a piquant ingenuity of invention. It is all very impossible and very fascinating. . . The reader is kept constantly alert for new developments, which are never quite what is anticipated. Like all the rest of the author's books, it provides capital entertainment."

The New York Times: "The interest is by turns pleasingly sentimental or strongly exciting. There are strange happenings in every chapter. . . The improbable has a wholesome tonic effect when the literary malady called 'realism' is epidemic."

The Boston Times: "Has the same dash, humor, and rapidity of movement which took readers of 'The Prisoner of Zenda' so by storm."

HENRY HOLT & CO.,

29 West 23d Street, New York.

THE HON. PETER STIRLING

And what people thought of him. By PAUL LEICESTER FORD. 12mo, cloth, $1.50.

"Floods of light on the *raison d'être*, origin, and methods of the dark figure that directs the destinies of our cities. . . Without giving Stirling a heroic pose, manages to win for him very hearty sympathy and belief. Stirling's private and domestic story is well knit with that of his public adventures. . . A very good novel."—*The Nation.*

"Timely, manly, thoroughbred, and eminently suggestive. . . Commands our very sincere respect. . . Highly dramatic crisis."—*The Atlantic Monthly.*

". . . Worth reading on several accounts."—*The Review of Reviews.*

"One of the strongest and most vital characters that have appeared in our fiction. . . A very charming love story.—*The Dial.*

"Both alive and easily recognizable."—*The New York Tribune.*

"Mr. Ford's able political novel."—*New York Times.*

"A fine, tender love story."—*The Literary World.*

FYFFE'S MODERN EUROPE.

1792–1878. *Popular edition*, in one volume. 12mo, $2.75 *net*. The same in 3 vols., 8vo, $7.50.

"Vigorous, thoughtful, and well-written."—*London Sat. Review.*

"As brilliant a sketch as we have seen for many a day."—*Nation.*

"It is by far the most important history published."—*Boston Advertiser.*

ANIMAL SYMBOLISM IN ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.

By E. P. EVANS. With a Bibliography and seventy-eight Illustrations. 12mo, buckram, $2.00 *net*.

"An attempt to explain the meaning of the real or fabulous animals which have been put to decorative uses in ecclesiastical architecture, tracing the growth of religious symbolism in its various phases, and furnishing some curious illustrations of religious caricature."—*The Outlook.*

ON PARODY.

By ARTHUR SHADWELL MARTIN. An essay on the art, and humorous selections from the masters, beginning with the Greeks and Romans. 12mo, $1.25.

"Of infinite delight and resource to lovers of English verse."—*The Outlook.*

"Much amusement will be found in this novel collection of poems, and information in the historical and critical portion."—*The Boston Times.*

EMMA LOU: HER BOOK.

By MARY M. MEARS. The humorous diary of a Western girl. 12mo, $1.00.

"The neatest, closest, and most accurate description of village life in exactly the way an uncommonly bright girl would see it. It is its exceeding naturalness which is so taking. . . We are inclined to give the book the highest of encomiums as a sound, wholesome, and most amusing story."—*New York Times.*

HENRY HOLT & CO., New York.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

A Biography. By W. FRASER RAE. With an Introduction by Sheridan's great-grandson, the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava. With portraits, etc. 2 vols., 8vo, $7.00.

"Of interest to all general readers, and of value to all those who desire an exact picture of one of the most original and commanding figures of the eighteenth century. . . There is much, however, about Sheridan's life which the well-informed reader does not know, and which he will never know unless he reads these volumes, and surely time spent in this way is not lost. . . Few books of the season can compare with it as regards value and interest."—*The New York Herald.*

IN INDIA.

By ANDRÉ CHEVRILLON. Translated by WILLIAM MARCHANT. A vivid and poetical description of Hindu India, luminous with the atmosphere, spiritual and physical, of that supersensitive clime. 12mo, $1.50.

"Writes his book with an enchanted pen, and cannot fail to captivate the reader. The setting of the book is worthy."—*The Chicago Times-Herald.*

"It particularly deals with the mystic side of the native Indians, the Brahmins, and the Hindus. He goes into their religion, their rites, their lives. We get a better idea of these people and their religion than we have ever had before. . . More fascinating than a novel and more instructive than many volumes written wholly for the purpose of enlightening the ignorant mind. . . One that we should treasure above hundreds of books of a similar nature."—*The Boston Times.*

"A charming chronicle of travel and fleeting impressions of the dreamy life of the Orient, written with all the piquancy of Gallic expression and a fine sense of the picturesque."—*The Detroit Free Press.*

RUSSIAN POLITICS.

By HERBERT M. THOMPSON. An account of the bearing of Russian geography and history on Russian politics, and of the bearings of the latter on questions of world-wide interest. Large 12mo, $2.00.

"The result of careful study, compactly, clearly, and effectively presented. . . The author's aim is to stir the friends of freedom throughout the world to a deeper interest in the cause of Russian liberty. His work is vivified by the fact that his heart is in it. The chapters upon the method in which the Russian serfs were emancipated, and the manner in which they have been almost re-enslaved by debt and taxation, are particularly worthy of the examination of students of social politics."—*The Outlook.*

"Gives the source of information in every case, and the hints thus afforded to the reader who desires to study any special phase of the question in greater detail are very useful. . . One of the best compilations which we have seen for a long time. Nothing abrupt or scrappy about it. Its five maps are of great value and interest to anyone who studies Russian topics. . . Its interest is undeniable."—*The Nation.*

HENRY HOLT & CO., NEW YORK.